So anyway... even though Ned had died all these years ago (not) he suddenly, and confusingly, was the topic of conversations we had for a while. How she felt destroyed. That he was the love of her life. In retrospect, I don't know how I didn't know the truth... but I didn't know or expect that Kari was a bit of a pathological liar... she would lie about things that she didn't need to. Just to have that power. She wanted you to believe her outrageous lies, if only to appease her strange little mind. This was something I tried to ask her about many times.

She confessed that she didn't know what made her the way she was, but she did leave some clues. Kari had dealt with men and boys all her life, as she was beautiful, but we had a bond that went beyond that... and even back then, she was uncharacteristically kind to me and I was privy to a side of her that she didn't show many, if any other guys. Except for Ned, maybe. But he wasn't around now... and Kari and I started to see more of each other. She was mourning and vulnerable, and I had no clue! I've been to group meetings and counselors and I can't help but think I have it worse than any other person there, every time. I had the most wonderful and loving... talented girl, who just happened to be a stunning beauty, a real-life tomboy, but often vulnerable and neurotic... I couldn't have ever asked for a better match, lol.

One thing people talk about in those meetings... "what would SHE want you to do"... or "how would SHE handle it if YOU had died?" Well, in the case of Ned, she started seeing more of the guy she was with when he died, which would be me, and pretend that it happened a long time ago, but that she was still grieving. I have firsthand knowledge of how she handled it back then... which is pretty much useless, though, because the person I knew back then, bore little resemblance to the woman I was with for all those years.

So when we got back together, I wanted to celebrate. I took her to Ruby Tuesday's because I liked the place at that time. When she got there we

ordered drinks and some appetizers. We ate light, because eating too much would make it harder to party later. She pulled out something I'd never seen. She had four strips of suboxone. She put two under her tongue and two on her inner cheeks. She talked funny while they were in there, as they trigger your salivary glands and she didn't want to swallow until they were absorbed into the membranous tissues of her mouth.
"ITH called THuboxone, and it geTHs me WAY higher than the pills I was on... I'd give you one, but it'd just make you puke all night" (very true)...

"so you're off the pills now"?
"well, not exactly... I mean I'll take them... I'd like to do some tonight"...

We partied light, as we did in those days and had some really nice intimate moments... But I still didn't know how I felt about her. I couldn't tell if she was really this way, or doing it as a cry for attention. It's like someone saying they're insane... are they? Can you actually SAY that you're f'ed up and not care? I wanted to get inside of her head, and I felt like I had the right. I had known her for a while now, and I wanted in.

When I woke up in the morning, she was gone again. I hated that. One of the girls I was dating at the time came over and saw something under the bed. She pulled out a 36 DD bra. She held it up and I almost wanted to laugh, looking at the huge thing as she held it up to her petite frame...

"OH MY GOD! Who's IS THIS?!"
I told her it must have been from my old girlfriend... she did after all, live with me...
"your last girlfriend was... um... extremely well-endowed"...
"yea... I guess... she had back problems... " (Which Kari did... her breasts were my blessing and her curse. She enjoyed them to an extent, but they didn't fit into her tomboy lifestyle and was always keen to "get them the fuck cut off").

Another time, the same girl noticed there was copious amounts of GLITTER all over my house and in my bed. You can never get rid of glitter... not entirely. A little bit of glitter will cover your house eventually! And she asked me “What’s up with the glitter all over your bed... oh my god! It’s all over YOU TOO!” It WAS all over me. I hadn’t noticed until the sun came up... but I was covered with her glitter. And even in my most personal area!

And finally... “SEAN! There is a blond hair extension... in your bathroom”.... OMG... Kari was an evil genius... “Are you dating a stripper?? Seriously?” Kari later told me she did it on purpose. Just to fuck with me. And it did, a little. But I wouldn’t have cared if lost any of those women. I even broke up with Kari more than a few times. I was wondering if I ever would find a girl that I loved... that no matter who it was or how many... there was never a girl that connected with me. Kari was my friend. We talked and had no secrets. I didn’t know she loved me. I didn’t know the majority of the things that she kept in that head of hers. She knew she was messed up and she didn’t expect me to want to be with her. But she wanted to get better and be that person for me. She just wasn’t ready. She was shattered over Ned. She didn’t feel like she could love, even if she was... she felt like she didn’t deserve to be happy. She also felt like she didn’t deserve me. That I was too good for her. I wasn’t an addict. I was a guy that had a lot going for him and had my choice of women and bands.
But I always had a feeling that things would someday change with Kari. That we would eventually find our way.

Kari had already told me that he died. It just seemed like a white lie at the time. But now it felt like a curse. Like she cursed him. She was a wreck and it confused the hell out of me. Kari was no angel. We partied a bit. We did stuff on occasion. Pills, blow, drinking... we had been together three years. Casually dating, but seeming like we had a future. But all of a sudden she was off the rails and I didn’t understand it at all. She talked about Ned all the time now. I thought maybe she was opening up at first, but it seemed less about me and more about him. It seemed like she was making reasons to do a lot of drugs and get out of her head all the time, and I didn’t even feel like I figured into anything next to this crazy

grief that appeared out of nowhere. The haunted girl that had been fun and playful, now somber and dark. I didn't understand grief. I certainly didn't understand grief that was supposed to be three years old, being fresh as a few days ago... and the girl I had thought so much of, turning into this haunted person who wanted to get ripped out of her skull every time I saw her. Who when I called her on the phone would talk about Ned and then ask me if I could find her pills. I thought she was losing her mind or just becoming some drug casualty. I started to withdraw. To back away. To not call.

She started to act more and more crazy. She would make plans with me and never follow through. Call me and not talk. Sometimes I thought she was asleep on the phone. She called me once and said she wanted to kill herself. I asked her why and she said because of Ned. WHAT IS IT ABOUT NED?? The DUDES BEEN DEAD FOR FOUR YEARS! I talked her down and I could tell she was genuinely upset. But it made no sense. Was she coming unhinged?

I didn't hear from her for a while. Months passed. I thought our little time had passed. I worried about her. I tried to call her and even called her folks. They said she was ok. She had just been busy. Busy?

I was at my favorite dive and she called me one day. She apologized first off. She said she had been so messed up for a while. That she had a delayed reaction to Ned's death and it had messed her up for a while. She said she was doing better and she wasn't doing drugs anymore. That was over. She certainly sounded different. This was 2006 in the summer of our third year. We talked like old times and I remembered why I liked her so much. She was interesting and there was so much going on in that head of hers. We talked and talked for hours. 3 hours... 4 hours... I had walked into the back of the bar where there weren't any people, sitting on a step facing out into the yard in the back, feeling the breeze and talking to my old friend and lover. I had missed her. A lot.

We were going to meet soon. We hadn't talked about a time, but I was happy at the thought of it. We had some good times and she was an awesome talent. And we talked until the sun started to set and didn't run out of words and everything was perfect until she hung up on me in mid sentence.

I was immediately suspicious. I heard her hang up. Her phone didn't die. She gasped like she heard something and hung up. It sounded like someone came home and she aborted the call. Something was up. I wasn't dumb.

She called me back the next day and apologized and said her phone had died. I told her it sounded like her man had gotten home. She asked me what I meant and sounded way too defensive. I figured I was right. She only made it more

apparent when she told me she had moved out of her parents house. And into a trailer. That made no sense. her parents house was a freaking estate. She had her own place there. She sort of came clean and said some things had happened. She made some mistakes and she was trying to undo them. She wanted to see me. I told her I'd believe it when I saw it. She wanted to see me that night. And I told her I would be around. But she didn't come. And I started to feel like things hadn't changed.

But she called the next day and I laid into her. I wanted her to be straight with me. She said she would be. Just to give her a little time. She asked me what I was doing that night and I told her I was playing pool with my mom and singing some kareoke at her favorite bar. She said that sounded like fun. She said she would come and I said I wouldn't hold my breath. But later that night, in came Kari. Dressed to the teeth in a sexy outfit that showed off her curves and made every guy in the place leer and every old lady gasp. She was hot. And she was hot for me. We hung out and had a few drinks and she was on good behavior. We sang some duets and did songs by our selves. She was so awesome the guy who ran the kareoke recorded our songs we did "so he could have something when we got famous"... she liked that. It was a nice night and we felt some of that old magic. It had been months and I had felt she had been through some stuff, but I had no idea what.

We spent the night together and when I woke up in the morning she was already gone.

I called her often and she talked to me a lot. And every now and then here phone would "drop the call" and I would have to wait to talk to her until the next day. We booked a few gigs and played together for the first time ever in our own little band. She agreed to do the gig, but as the time grew closer it seemed like she wasn't into it as much and I could tell she was troubled. I could also tell she wasn't the sober girl I talked to that first day I talked to her after our long break. She was spooked and frustrating. She was smoking and it made her voice a little worse than it should have been. She stopped by the quickie mart in my town on the way to the gig that night and my friend Gary was working and he recognized her. "Hey! I know you!" And Kari's eyes got huge, like she was terrified! "From where?!" she asked. "From Sean... you're his girl, right? The singer?"

"Oh... yea." He told me about this the next day. Said she looked like she had seen a ghost.

She got to the gig and things clicked ok, but it wasn't the old magic... it wasn't bad though.

The band I was playing with that night was a three piece that was very potent. A guy named Davis on the bass and my long-time drummer Mike... they were both obviously and overtly hitting on Kari... at one point in the night something hit me and it was a drumstick and I turned around and jovially yelled “FUCKER!” to which Kari said, “YOU fuck her, you BROUGHT her!” which cracked everyone up and charmed Davis the bassist, who wouldn’t leave her alone after that. But at the end of the night, his plans were dashed as he saw her and I making out, outside of the bar, under their awning... Sorry... I brought her... so I’m... um... yea!....

The band I had first seen her in had fired her and she was playing with a new band. The guitarist was on vacation for a few weeks and she called me to play with her.

I drove all the way up to her neck of the woods, an hour away from me in rural Missouri to a roadhouse band called 21 Rock and we had a nice gig there, playing all the songs she asked me to learn for that band. She was distant to me, though. She said that some of Ned’s family was there, but I didn’t believe it. It seemed phony. I could tell when she was lying. At the end of the night I wanted to stay with her, but she said I couldn’t. She said things were messed up, but they wouldn’t be for much longer. She would explain soon.... but for now, she was sorry. Sorry for everything. Sorry for being crazy about Ned and being so distant for that while. There were things that I needed to know. She seemed distracted and maybe a little high.

I was friends with her band on Myspace after that and kept loose tabs. We talked on there and I saw them make an announcement that Kari wouldn’t be playing that weekend. Something had come up... etc. and it worried me. Then the next week I didn’t hear from her and the band put a message out saying she wouldn’t be playing with them anymore. That she was too unreliable and had “issues”. All this time I didn’t hear from her and I couldn’t reach her.

Finally she called me three or so weeks later.
She wanted me to come pick her up. She wanted to come over. She said she could even stay for a while if I wanted. I wondered what was up, but I drove up.
She had moved into the bunkhouse below the hill where her parents house sat, so she had her own place now. When I got there she ran out to my truck and jumped in. She was happy! She was giddy!
“I’m so glad to see you!”
“really?”
“Yes! I’ve had the craziest couple of weeks!”
“Yea, I saw the band message on Myspace, I was worried!”
“Oh, that’s no big deal. They were assholes.”
She hugged me and laid a big kiss on me and I grabbed her hands and felt something a little odd and looked down.
“I bet you’re wondering about these?”
She held up her arms and her wrists were both bandaged.
“Yea... ok... yea... what’s up?”
“Well... it’s a long story. Are you ready?”
“I’m always ready to hear your stories, baby.”
“Baby! I like that! Keep that... ok... you ready?”
“Yes!”
“I... WAS... MARRIED!”
“what??”
“To a complete piece of shit!”
“ok”
“I basically was hanging out with this guy because he was Ned’s friend and drug dealer and he kept me so messed up I didn’t know where I was half the time. I barely remember getting married. He was a total asshole and I got so depressed. I couldn’t believe I messed up so bad. My parents were kind of disgusted and I was staying at his house... I wanted to come home, but they told me I couldn’t because I was married now... I started freaking out. I wanted to go home. So I sliced up my wrists and called 911 and they got me out of there.”
“So...”
“So I spent a few weeks in rehab and the psych ward and they told my parents I shouldn’t be with him...”
“So that worked...”
“Yea! I don’t have to be married anymore! I feel like a thousand pounds has been lifted off of me!”

“Holy shit babe. That was... that wasn’t what I expected”
“Sean, it was bad. I’m so sorry. I know I’ve been a nut. I’m still a but. But you kind of saved me. Talking to you really made me happy and I realized that I’ve been so stupid all this time. I wanted out of there. I was living in a TRAILER! Can you picture me in a trailer?”
“hahah... no, now that you mention it! oh, the horror!”
“Well. It wouldn’t be so bad with you. I’d live in a trailer with you.”
“Oh yea?”
“Yea. I’d live in a cardboard box with you if we were together. You’re my music man.”
“Awww... god Kari. This is the girl I remember. My sweet little songbird.”
“Songbird! I like that too! Keep that, too!”
“Holy shit. You were married??”
“Yes. His name was Brett. And he was a controlling dick that was content to keep me on as many pills as I could take. I could have died and I’m pretty sure he would have shrugged it off. I might have been his first girlfriend... if that’s even what I was. I don’t even remember having sex with him ever! Oh god... but I probably did. How horrible! Is that even legal?”
“I think maybe in Missouri it is... hell... I don’t know. Apparently slicing up your wrists in a trailer is a sort of hillbilly annulment! So it all works out! hahah”
“Hey! Hillbilly annulment!? ...ok... that’s funny. hahah”
“The whole thing reminds me of that song by Elton John. Someone saved my Life Tonight”
“I LOVE that song! You gave me that record, remember?”
“I do”
“It has the poster in it. So what does it mean?”
“Well, Elton was married to a woman...”
“Really?!?”
“Yes. And of course he’s gay. And he was really depressed and apparently she didn’t care and thought she could “fix him” or something... and he was feeling suicidal... and he had his head in the oven one day and his friend came by, I believe it was John Baldry, or Long John Baldry as he was called... anyway... he asked him “Reg, because his name was Reginald and his friends called him that, Reg, why is your head in the oven? and Elton said he didn’t want to be married so he was going to kill himself. And he basically told him that he didn’t have to be married if he didn’t want to be. Everyone knew he was queer and wondered why he did it anyway! And Elton was so relieved and told him that he had saved his

life. And of course he mentioned that Elton had an electric oven and would have to bake himself for a long time and it would be a long and painful death...”
“hahahahah... is that true?”
“Yea, I think so”
“Well. You definitely saved my life, Sean”
“I did?”
“Yea. Talking to you that night for four hours. I was so sad when I called you. I didn’t even think you would talk to me after all the things I had done... the mess I’d been. I was sad still, but I knew what I had to do. And I knew I wanted to be with you.”
“Oh baby. I’m glad.”
“I’m glad too.... BABY!”
“Hahah... you called me baby!”
“I like it. OH! OOOH!”
“What??”
“We should record that song!”
“The Elton song?”
“Yea! I want to do it. I want to do it for you. For the same reason Elton did it for...”
“John Baldry”
“Yea! Long JOHN BALDRRY”
“Well... it’s a long ass song. Tons of words. And it’s slow. It’s ALL PIANO... and it kind of lays there. I don’t know how we”-
“Fix it!”
“Ok. But I just have guitars and like I said it”-
“You can fix it! We haven’t ever recorded and we should!”
“You’re right. Ok. Let’s do it. I’ll figure something out. And you are the best singer I’ve ever heard. The best!”
“So we’ll do it?”
“Oh we’ll do it! And then we might record a song too!”
“Bwah hah. Yea. Thank you Sean.”
“What now?”
“For being you. And letting me be me. Crazy, unpredictable, troubled, unreliable... me.”
“Kari. You’re just a sweet little songbird that lost her way for a while. But I’m glad you came home.”
The poster for that Elton John LP I gave her 17 years ago is still hanging in our room as it has for all this time.

Kari and Sean (First recording 2006) Someone saved my life tonight.
https://archive.org/download/someonesavedkariandsean2006/Someone%20Saved%20Kari%20and%20Sean%202006.mp3

We hung out for a while after we recorded that song and then I didn't hear from her for a while... weeks passed. I tried calling her, but I got no answer. She called me up at some point and told me she was busy with her job all the time and just didn't have any free time. I thought, oh well, at least she's not scraping bottom, as I feared. I saw her just a few times in that period and I wasn't really happy with what I saw... she had put on about 30-40 pounds and seemed to be out of it. I decided I didn't want to do pills with her and this made her lose interest, but I did do cocaine with her. I figured it would actually be a step in the right direction.

One time Kari had promised to come over, but it was getting late and I wasn't getting through on her phone, so I called her folks' line. For some reason I had memorized her folk's number way back at the beginning, as we often talked on their phone in the early days, when cell phone minutes were costly... So I called, and her dad answered. I asked her if she was there, or maybe she got called into work?... he said "work? Kari doesn't work. She hasn't had a job for over a year"...

I was pissed. I had been lied to on an ongoing basis for a long time and I was ready to tell her off. She finally called me and I let her have it.
"Hello?"
"Sean?"
"Um yea?"
"Why the hell did you call my dad?"
"Because you said you were coming over and I wanted to know what was up! Why on earth would you lie to me about something so trivial? Just WHY?!? What reason would you have to lie to ME?!? I won't think any less of you... why do you lie so goddam much? Why is it so important that I

believe your crazy shit! It MAKES NO SENSE! I don't want to talk to you or see you anymore. You've just turned into some drugged out, CRAZY, FAT CHICK!!" and hung up... and then I felt bad. And I felt bad for a while. I called her about a month later. I was playing in a performance art band at a giant house party in Chicago... it was a long drive and I was riding along in a band van and was bored just riding for hours and I started thinking about her... and decided I was worried and I missed her... so I decided to call on the cell. She answered and sounded like her usual self. But she was eager to talk. I thought she would just hang up on me after what I said, but she took it surprisingly well. I told her I was sorry right off the bad. She said she was sorry about being such a freak and that the pills she was taking were changing her mind and she had these alternate realities that she felt were almost real. She didn't like the person she was, so she invented things to sound "normal"... but what really bothered her was,
"do you really think I'm fat??"
"no... I like your body. I do worry about your health, but you're not fat. You're sexy no matter what. I've been kicking myself for saying that for months..." I really had.

She forgave me and invited me over to swim for a day and to bring my guitar... as long as I "don't mind swimming with a fat chick"... she wanted to do Cyndi Lauper's song Time After Time... so I took five minutes to learn the chords and background vocals... and we performed for about a half hour, poolside for just her parents and the dogs. It was a nice and very warm day and we played in the pool until it was dark and swam naked for hours after her folks were down for the night... and had sex in the pool and again inside the house in her perfect little black-lit room. A new picture of John Lennon in NY gracing the wall where the rebel flag used to be.

I called her up the next week and she said she wanted to come over. I waited for hours and finally called her back. She said she was in the hospital and I lost it. I told her that we were doomed to never be anything other than fuck-buddies. The lying was the one thing I couldn't stand... I said "You can tell me anything! I am an open book to you. But you just

constantly are making crazy shit up, and just when I think I can trust you and let you back into my life, you let me down. Every time! I actually thought you liked me. But you can't even be straight with me."

I told her this was it and I didn't want to see or hear from again.
This was at the time Facebook was just coming into being and everyone was getting on... one of my first messages I ever got on FB was from her mom... it started with, "You incredible bastard! Kari thinks the world of you and you bitch her out because she's in the hospital? What kind of person are you??? I hope it's for real this time and Kari finds a good man who's her OWN AGE... do not call me, if you do it will be considered harassment... Mr DRUG DEALER"...

Drug dealer? Is that what I was?? I hadn't done a drug run for her in years... although Kari and I seemed to always be partying on something... It bothered me then, and it bothers me to this day.

Now I felt bad again... but really... it just seemed like another yarn she was spinning... she said she had STOMACH CANCER for chrissakes... every week it was something else... how could I believe she was in the hospital on the day she had planned to come see me? It wasn't fair. But I still felt bad, if it was true. I really didn't know if it was... her mom would back her up, if needed... she would confirm a lie as truth... because they both had their secrets and both covered up for each other.

I didn't talk to her for a while. I guess I had given up on this ever being anything other than what it was... a relationship of convenience and sex. I got back into my music and tried not to let it bother me. But it did. It did. Eventually she called me up. I was never sure if she was actually in the hospital that day, but we patched things up again, enough to admit that we missed each other and started seeing each other again. Though I had given up on her becoming a steady girlfriend, I enjoyed her company, and I was still dating other girls... between all of them, there was probably the equivalent of one girlfriend... they all were sorely lacking in some way. Kari,

who I had everything in common with, who was my best friend, but often would lie to me and become unreliable and disappear or blow me off when we had plans... then my backups... the girl who as nice and loved to party and have sex... the bookish nerd who liked to party and have sex, and the stuffy uptight girl, who liked to drink and have sex. None of them were really girlfriends, or women I would drop everything to see, so I kept it light... like Kari did with me... kept them all at arms length for as long as they would put up with it, which wound up being many years, strangely enough! I reckoned having four of them was the only way to make it worth my while!

I started playing with an original band called Alabaster Brown and we were tearing up the festival circuit on the strength of the compositions Chris and I had written, and those songs were catching on. We sold more Cd's than both times I was on a major label combined. We were going somewhere, opening for national acts, and also providing tour support for national acts that needed a backing band... it was a good time artistically... But the band was doomed to fail from petty conflicts and lack of professionalism...

Kari was curious about this band, as I had told her about all of her adventures. She came out to a gig we were playing at a place called The Shanti. She was with a friend of hers named Carl... an older cat who I think was a musician as well. I told the band that my girl Kari had come out... and that she was in the back garden by the door. Nate, the rhythm guitarist and other vocalist said "you mean that girl with the blonde hair sitting by the door? That's not a girl dude..." the drummer laughed loudly "dude, that's a tranny..." and the drummer piled on more insults and I decided I wouldn't introduce her to my new "friends"... Kari had adult acne and tended to wear a lot of makeup in public. Sometimes it went away and she wouldn't wear hardly any, but this wasn't one of those times. A lot of people loved that band, and we stuck it out for a long time, but it was things like this that made it doomed. I was supposedly the leader of the band and had rarely involved my personal life, and the one time I brought someone out that I cared about, I was brought back to the reality that these weren't my friends,

they were cats that I wrangled and taught to play some songs. Some of them were friends and still are, but the friction that existed was real and palpable. I only hope Kari wasn't upset that I didn't make introductions... I wasn't ashamed of her, I was ashamed of them.

I got a call the next day. It was the guy she was with at the gig. Carl. He was drunk.
"Is this SEAN, the SHIT!"
"Carl?"
"Yea! I just want to tell you you're a shit!"
"Oh yea? Ok then. Been drinking a little?"
"Yea, I'm drunk, and you're a shit!"
"I think we covered that. Is there anything else?"
"Yea. Kari loves you, you shit!"
"Oh... I like Kari. She's great."
"No you don't! You didn't even introduce her to your band! She thinks you hate her! You shit! I tried for her, but she wants you! You SHIT!"
"Oh... man, I feel bad about that. Those guys are assholes, though. I was going to-"
"You're a SHIT! She really likes you!"
"I know... I mean, really?... she really likes me that much?""She loves you, you SHIT! And you didn't even introduce her! How do you think she feels about that?"
"Oh... fuck. I'm a shit."
"You're A SHIT!"
"Ok. Thanks for telling me, Carl. I'll take care of it."
"You're welcome! You SHIT!"
And I hung up.
I felt terrible. But I had my reasons for not introducing her. It would be too hard to tell her what they said. I decided to apologize and just let her think I was "A SHIT"...

I called her and explained the situation. I told her I didn't get along with those guys and explained that I was going to introduce her but they had

said something insulting and I decided not to. I told her that I really didn't like them and I probably needed to be with cooler people who weren't so superficial. I know it bothered her, but I told her everything. She thought I was ashamed of her, but I told her it was the other way around. I was ashamed of the assholes I was playing with.

I got busy with a recording my band and the CD that came out... It was a very nicely self-produced album called Alabaster Brown - Mississippi Mud Stomp... an idea of Chris' to describe the slow, swampy, cajun funk that we derived the name from. We had started recording various originals and covers at my studio and she came over to my house more often than ever, having mostly overcome her fear of driving. We saw each other often, but we didn't say we were in love. I convinced myself that falling in love with Kari would end in certain heartbreak. She could change it all, by being reliable, truthful and not making me crazy... but she didn't. But I still liked her more than any than any other girls I was dating. I tried to get her to sing with my band, but she was shy and didn't want to do it, but she came to many gigs with a friend of hers and watched us play several times. She said it turned her on to watch me lead the band as I did... I was glad that it worked on SOMEone... especially her.

When our CD release party came, she wanted to come, but I had already invited another girl I was seeing, as I didn't know if she would truly drive to the city and come. She was a little hurt by that, but she let it go. It was a strange time for me. I was seeing several women and I guess I needed that at the time... that amongst the 3 or four women I was seeing, there was a complete girlfriend maybe amongst all of them, but none of them were complete in my eyes. We had a great night at the CD release, with the Lucas Schoolhouse packed to capacity for this up-and-coming local band that had made a very worthy original CD. The harp player I had hired for the session was there and other guest soloists to round out the evening. A guy named Tim Session opened for our band, singing and playing a frenetic acoustic guitar set with a phrase sampler and some very tight acoustic rhythms that were pretty impressive. Our harp player was a basket

case and was always drinking too much. I had ridden with him in his car that he had to blow into a tube to start! He had me blow into the tube for him on various occasions to go somewhere after he was lit up! While he was out having a smoke, a police car came up and told asked him if he knew who's truck was parked illegally on the street. He told him it was our opening act's... he told him to get it moved or it would be towed away. He went up the stairs to the stage area and in between songs he told the guy what was up and he tossed the keys to the harp player... and he looked up at the guy as though to say "really? you want me to move it"... but he accepted the challenge and went down the stairs to move the guys truck. When he got in, he started the thing up, revved the motor into high gear and popped it into reverse, rocketing backwards up the block about 150 feet and slamming into a car that had just started coming down the street, STILL IN REVERSE!!

When I found out about it I was mortified! His wife, who had money, came out shortly after this and paid off the two parties with personal checks for amounts they agreed on. He was off the hook and played the show pretty well for being sauced up!

This was the only band that I was ever in that she didn't sing with. And its just as well. A few years later I broke the band up, after we played several high profile shows in a single weekend at the St Louis Mardi Gras. I had set up two PA systems, a recording rig with video and audio, played both shows as the front man, lead singer and lead guitarist and then went back the next day to break the two PA systems down and recording systems. We had been paid a lot, and I had worked three days in a row to make the gigs go off smoothly, and even though we were paid extra, the band didn't want to give me any money for all the extra work that I did. I probably wouldn't have even taken it, but when I suggested it, they all balked at the idea and I walked out that night. The band decided to take my name, my songs and attempt to do it without me. Which didn't work. They even hired a high dollar entertainment attorney to assist them and wound up paying over $15,000 to that guy.

I sued for the name of the band, and the registered the trademark. They had tried to keep the band, the name, and the songs I brought with me, but it failed miserably and eventually a court injunction stopped it completely and they fragmented into obscurity. I used the name later for the band she and I started. It never had the chance to do what that first one did, because of our issues and the inability to tour... I always thought that it would happen for us again. She was so much better than anyone I had ever played with, and I was wanting so bad to get her out there with our original music and show the world what a great talent she was.

Alabaster Brown had just broken up and it was mid 2009. I hadn't heard from Kari for a while and was a little worried. She had called me a few times and never sounded good. She sounded sedated. Slow talking and a chore to talk to. I wondered at the waste of talent and the beautiful girl that no one could tame. That seemed as elusive as the songbird in the tree in my back yard. Out of reach... beautiful, but not for me to keep. Singing her songs, but for no one but herself. Making the same mistake every day... and no matter what I said, no matter how I tried to get through to her, she would just be Kari. Love me or leave me alone, Kari.

It was months since I'd heard from her and my new Alabaster Brown band was getting busy, and I had started to forget this chapter of my life again. The girl I almost loved so many times... the one that got away... the one that got lost and never found her way back. I accepted that there wasn't anything I could do. And then a familiar number came on my screen. It took me a minute to register who it was...

It was Kari. And she sounded so different. She sounded like... like the awkward and shy, almost nerdy, tomboy that I had met years ago. 6 years had passed. And she was back... She had been busted. They caught her forging prescriptions, something like 200 separate offenses... and she was sent to forced rehab and drug court. She was on probation and couldn't leave her house. Her parents had moved her to the bunkhouse on their

property. I was actually relieved to hear it. Even if she was in trouble, she probably needed to be in trouble.

We talked for a very long time and she told me she was sorry for everything that had happened. That she wasn't in the hospital. Her mother was covering for her. That she barely remembered the last few years of her life and she was ashamed of what had happened. That I had been there for her the whole time. A lover and a friend. She truly liked me and valued my company and she was thinking clearly for the first time in years. None of her new friends wanted to just hang out without taking drugs and she needed a friend. A real friend.

She asked if could I be her friend? I told her of course. She said... "I mean... just a friend? I know it's crazy, considering out past. But I'm trying to find myself. I need a friend. At least for now. Is that OK?"

"Of course, Kari. I'm really glad to hear you again. I had begun to wonder if I imagined this girl. The girl I met so many years ago. So full of life and creativity... soft hearted... mischievous..."

"I know... I've been MIA for a long time."

She asked me "can we do something fun and record some songs together? I got a copy of pro-tools like you have and have a small studio here in the bunkhouse... I've been recording, but you know so much more about it, and you can play all the instruments... what do you think?"

I was genuinely excited. I had no idea what we would come up with musically, but I had missed her. I had really missed the girl I remembered. I mean... I loved her voice and thought we had potential as musicians, but I had worked with so many singers and artists that just couldn't get it together when they recorded... But the one time we recorded three years before was surprisingly good, and she was messed up then! And I knew she was a good person underneath all the shit she put us both through. And being her friend kind of felt like a step backward, but her sobriety a HUGE step forward... there was no way I could let her be alone in this time... she needed me and I was going to be her sober sponsor... I was

going to be a good man and we were going to make some great music... I was pretty sure of all of that.

She had put on a few pounds in rehab. She told me the food there was different. That they put something in it that just made you hungry or something and they were always giving you too much of it, because so many of the people that were there had been unhealthy and needed to eat. She was still gorgeous, even though her impossibly sexy figure from her youth was gone, she was so well endowed that a few extra pounds still looked good on her, and even though her face was slightly more chubby than before, she was still amazing, and her enormous indigo eyes shone with new animation and clarity. I was full of longing for this person that I was “just friends” with. But I did my best. She was so amazing, though. I could tell she still liked me. More than liked me. But I think they tell you in rehab to take it easy with relationships. That you should work on yourself first. And I’m pretty sure that’s why I was in the friend zone... but honestly, it’s one of my best memories of being with her.

I came over and had brought a six pack of Bud Light Lime... even though she had stopped drinking it, I still did.

She said “What is THAT?!”
I looked sheepish...
“can you please take those somewhere. I can’t do anything. I can’t drink or anything. If you can’t hang out with me and be completely sober, I think this is a mistake.”
I apologized, sincerely. I told her I didn’t know and was sorry I brought them and put the beer back in my truck. She forgave me. It wasn’t a huge deal, but she wanted me to be as sober as she was, even if I didn’t have much choice or control over her for all those years...

She had a beat track programmed and some lyrics. She asked me to collaborate and I came up with some good lines. She was making an outline for the song... it was about a woman who had done too many drugs

and was out of control and killed her boyfriend, but has no idea what she did... and all of these things come out in the verses, but there was no chorus... She was thinking that the chorus should be something positive, to counter the verses about her being basically nuts and psychotic. She played some of the ideas for the chorus melody, singing “da-da-da” in place of the words... in my head “da da da” started to take shape as “Better now”... I looked at her and sang
“I’m better now”
and she grabbed her pen...
“yea! That’s it!” she said with a smile...
I furrowed my brow and sang “I’m better now... um... At least that’s how I feel... OH! I have no... wait... I have FEWER friends, but I know that they’re all REAL... LOL”
“hahahah”
...and she improvised “I’m better now, they say I’m doing fine, if I could just convince them it’s just me inside my miiind!”
“YES!”
“yep, that’s it!”

Kari And Sean (Our First Song Written Together) Better Now 2009
https://ia803009.us.archive.org/24/items/KariAndSeanBetterNow/Kari%20And%20Sean%20-%20Better%20Now.mp3

So later after we had recorded and mixed the song, we hung out and talked for a bit, both laying in her bed, relaxing as friends who had a history, but were still close... And I said I was really glad that she faced up to being an addict and was getting better. I was genuinely happy for her, as I had feared the worst for so long. I didn’t notice her expression changing.

She looked at me, visibly hurt. “did you just call me a drug addict??!?”
“Well... um... yea? I mean isn’t that the first step? I mean-”
“can you please just leave”.
“really?”
“please...”

“ok... I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to insult you. I came here to be clean and sober with you... you have to know that you did have a problem... and...”

She had turned away and was silent and I felt awkward. So I left.

Two months went by.

And again I wondered what would come of this strange and beautiful creature... if I would ever see her again. I tried to not let it bother me... but she was the most peculiar case. Why can’t she just be easy on me?

I finally heard from Kari after our first writing and recording session. I was relieved. I never knew if I had seen the last of her... She was truly someone I valued in my life, though it was hard to rely on her for anything. She apologized for the last time we were together. She said I was right and she hadn’t faced the fact that she was an addict, but for some reason when I said it, she knew it was true, but it upset her. She didn’t want to acknowledge that she had a problem... in her mind the problem was that she had been CAUGHT... not that the problem was her... that SHE had a problem. And she had done something wrong. It was something she admitted to me and her probation officer... and the judge that was deciding her future at the time. She became good friends with her officer and talked to her frequently, usually once a month, and to a lesser but similar extent, the judge from her drug court. They both new her and through the years, thought the world of her and hoped she would find fame and fortune as the bright star that she was. But back then, in 2010, she finally agreed. She was an addict. I saw her probation officer at Kari’s funeral. I had heard about Kari’s and her unlikely friendship over the years and she had heard about me. More evidence of the wonderful person she was and her need for “real” friends. She touched so many people, even in the most unlikely situations. She told me she loved Kari and was shocked and saddened by her demise. A lot of people were.

She wanted to know if we were still friends. I told her it was never issue and her mood brightened. She said she had some new song ideas and needed me to help. So I came back to the bunkhouse and recorded song after song after song... content, for the moment, as friends and nothing more.

She said she had been thinking a lot about why she used drugs so much. She really was trying to figure it all out. She said that she never lost control before Ned died... but his death put her over the edge and she started doing them for the escape. That the reality of things was so bad... the grief. I wondered again, why after so many years it had gotten so bad.

She wanted to do a song that dealt with her drug use and recovery. She was finally in recovery mode. She worried that she had done so much damage to her brain already... We cooked up some music and the lyrics came out easy “Bad Damage” was the song. And it became one in a series of songs that dealt with drug use and recovery.

We also started doing songs about death and loss at this time. I don’t know what to make of all the songs that dealt with this. At first I was understanding, because it was obvious they were about Ned. I understood that she was really torn up over his death. So much so, that it made me feel insecure. But whatever I was, I was here... and that counted for something. But I know on one occasion I made mention of how awesome it would be if some wonderful and sexy girl could write a song for me, and you know... I wouldn’t have to die for it to happen. She looked at me a little coldly... I know it was a kind of mean thing to say. But she took it to heart. She started to consider me and what I meant to her. It was one of the many things that kept us from becoming a committed couple for so many years. There were many reasons... but her being so hung up on Ned was a big one. And that she often went off the rails in one way or another... her casual lies. One time I was over and she was playing records on the system that I got her and she told me how much she loved “The Stranger”... an LP by Billy Joel... and she played the song “She’s Always a Woman”... and the line he sung, “And she’ll ruin your faith with her casual

lies”... and Kari looked at me. “I know what you’re thinking”... I said “I know you know what I’m thinking. I’m an open book. I’ll tell you what I’m thinking at any time. But I never know what you’re thinking. And if you told me, honestly, I wouldn’t even know if it were true”...

And so the death songs became part of our thing... our style... my strange, romantic, sexy, unpredictable sometimes girlfriend. I even started helping her write them and even found a few covers. Almost every song we did after this time, bore the marks of those early songs. Every song dealt with loss, sorrow, lost love, recovery, addiction and SEX... but I can’t complain. I was smack dab in the center of most of them.

And many songs into our recording career... the death songs were still coming at regular intervals... and this song came up one weekend, when she was staying with me and we were recording in my studio. It was a country song that we wanted to do. “Who You’d Be Today”... and I knew what it was. It was a song for Ned... but what I didn’t realize was it was the week that Ned had died, February 12th... about 6 years previous. Something I would never forget later... but this was still early in our relationship. And I did the song with her... knowing what it was. That it was ok... I would do it... even though it wasn’t anything to do with me... she would appreciate me all the more for doing it... and she did!

And she went in and did the vocals... and I was running the board. And she did it in ONE TAKE... and I was proud of her. It was amazing. ONE take... I called to her... and she didn’t answer... so I opened the sliding glass door to the soundproof room and she was in the dark. She turned the light off to sing sometimes... and I walked in and she was quiet. I went to turn the light and she said “No... don’t”...
“What’s up? That sounded good!”
“Yea...”
“Are you ok?”
A pause...
“hey... aww... aww... I’m sorry. Was it a song you and him did?”
“Yea” she squeaked...
“awwwww... come here baby!”
And I held her as her body gently pulsed with dead quiet little sobs and my shoulder was warmed by her face and dampness from her tears...

We stayed there in the dark for about ten minute as I rocked her gently... holding on to her tightly and just gently rocking back and forth slowly... almost like a slow dance... but only to comfort... and her voice brightened...
“Sean... you’re a good man”.

And all during this time, she was getting herself clean, going to drug court every week, meetings, and seeing me every few days.... but we were friends. And I wondered if that’s all we were now. That if our relationship was something that only happened when she was on drugs. Was it that unhealthy to be with me? Was I gross? It bothered me a little, but I still held out hope... because whatever the case, we seemed to be closer than we ever had been before... even without the hot sex.

And about three songs into this cycle, she called me up and asked if I was coming over that night. I said I was planning on it. She said “cool... do you think that later on, after we’re done making another awesome song... we could... you know... ‘DO IT’”...
I hadn’t heard her use that term in years. It used to be our big joke. She would say it all the time and I would laugh every time she said it! And at first she didn’t understand... but later... we both laughed. “DO IT!” hahah.

I said “do it? do what?” She could tell I was talking through big smile...
“OH... you mean have sex?” I asked coyly.
“yea, DO. IT.”
“um yea, sure..ok, but who says that? Do it? I mean are you FOURTEEN? I think I may need to see some ID... “
“stop it”
“I mean yesss... so ju vant to MAAKE LOOOVE”
“stop”
“zee beast with two backs... mmm yes”
“I changed my mind, I don’t wanna do it”
“oh jess baby! less doo eet!”
“STOP IT”

So yea... and that's how we started back up again... "doing it"

Sean And Kari (Music video made by Kari for her NA group) Bad Damage. 2009
https://youtu.be/2isJf_yIOks

And a few songs later, and a few "doin'- it" sessions later, some at her house and some at mine. She disappeared again.

I heard from her a a month down the line... she again apologized and told me she had been seeing this guy, who she really liked. That he just kind of pushed his way into her life. She said he was just a distraction. She wanted to see me and do a recording.

I didn't know how to take it. I had just started to take her seriously again. I wondered what I was to her. But I was still dating other girls and she knew it... so I couldn't really say anything.

I showed up to her house in the early evening and she had the recording gear out. She said "You wanna hear something funny?"
I said "sure!"
"It's a song Tony wrote for me. You have nothing to worry about, by the way! He's horrible!"
I felt bad, though. I hadn't really ever written her a song. I wondered when I could have ever done it? When were we ever serious enough that I would have the chance to write her one? And what would it say? I secretly love you and would like you to stop screwing up our relationship long enough so I can decide if we will ever have a future? Not very lyrical... OR romantic!

She started the recording and I heard the dudes' voice.
"I love you Kari"... ugh... what the fuck... and in the background I heard "I love you Tony"... and my heart sank. Then the song started. It was horrid. I could have written her a better song the night we met. I could have made

up a better one on the spot. I could have grunted a better song while we were DOIN IT!

It was trite, badly written... badly sung... he was indeed horrible. Nothing to worry about there... but the way the song started... it got to me. I must have looked like I saw a ghost.
As the song played, I listened and my mind was racing. So that's it. She just brought me here to tell me she's in love with this guy. I lost my chance. She found someone and she's going to put me back in the friend zone. What could I have done? She was a train wreck until recently. I just wanted a few weeks of normal before I decided if I-...
"So you see!? He's terrible! Hey... are you ok?"
"Um... yea."
"What's wrong?"
"Nothing... I just... I feel bad I never wrote you a song... and..."
"You're upset about the beginning, aren't you?"
"You said you loved him..."
"Sean! You know me! I just met the guy! He's so pushy. I couldn't not say it... he would have freaked out. You know me! I don't love anyone!"
"You loved Ned"...
"Yea... I did... But Ned died... and that part of me died. So you're really upset?"
"Yea... what do you think? We've known each other for years and I hear this guy telling you he loves you after a few weeks... I've been your friend, your lover... I've saved your life... I.. ugh... I'm sorry. Let's just have fun. I shouldn't let it bother me."
"Maybe I should be the one that's bothered Sean. I'm sorry. I forget you're not like me. You're not damaged like me. You feel things more. I just got my feelings back... and I gotta tell you they're overrated!"
"I don't think they are"...
"You're a sweetheart, that's why. Tell you what. Let's do this song, and we'll have a night like we used to have. This guy means nothing to me. You mean ten times what he does. He just flattered me. He's a good looking guy! And he was very persuasive! Downright pushy!"

“Please! You’re killing me!”
“Ah! Sorry... come on. Tonight is just for us. You deserve it!”

We started working on a song like the other ones, about her recovery from drugs, she had some ideas, but the lyrics were coming slow and they sounded trite. “I seem to have an addiction” hmm... I told her “since this is my night, can we do something sexy? Something rockin?”
“You’re still jealous about that song, aren’t you?”
“Yea... a little. I want to write a song about us. I feel bad that I never wrote you one. Maybe we can write one. Maybe you could have an addiction to ME!”
“That’s pretty cool. People have sex addictions... and we do rock THAT!”
“*Baby-baby, you KNOW how to rock it!*”
She wrote that down... “Keep goin! I have ‘I seem to have an addiction to you, baby baby, you know how to rock it”
“Haha... so we’re going to do a song about drugs, but I get to be the drug?”
“Sure! Why not?? Sex, drugs and rock n roll... all in one song! Has that been done?”
I thought about it. “uhh.. umm.. no?? no!”
She sang, “*I seem to have an addiction to you, your loves in my brain and there’s nothing I can do!*”
“VEINS! You’re love’s in my VEINS!!”
“See!? This is why I do this with you! No one’s ever written THAT before!”
“Nope... that’s hot!... and nasty!... I can’t wait to SHOOT you up!”
“Hahahah... Mister Sean! That’s pretty hot!”
“We’re making lyrics... it’s allowed!”
“You never talk dirty! You should do that more!”
“Well... I would do it more, if we saw each other more”...
“Fair enough. We’ll start seeing each other more. I miss you. I do. I guess I didn’t know you were a normal guy. I thought you were too cool to have needs...”
“*Only fools have needs! But this one never begs!*”
“OOH!... writing that down...”

“That’s actually a lyric by Pete Townsend... But let me think about us... OH!... *I don’t wanna close my eyes, I know when I wake up, you’ll be gone*”
“Aww... that IS me... It’s true... hmm... how bout *You run your hand down my thigh, feels so right it must be wrong*!”
“GREAT!... What else do I do?”
“Hmm... OH! *When you open your mouth,... poetry comes out, and I’m fallin for every line*!”
“That’s so hot, baby!”
“A hot mess! haha”
“We’re just a hot mess!”
“YEA! *We’re just a hot mess, but together we... DO JUST FINE!*”
“And then the CHORUS... That’s good for a start. Let’s put down the chords and we’ll write the rest when we get a scratch track down. I’m excited! This is gonna rock!”
“Can we do this one heavy?? I mean... we’ve done everything else. Let’s do something heavy... raunchy... HARD! Like almost METAL!”
“I’m way ahead of you!”

We knocked the track out in record time. I laid down the drums, then the bass, then the guitar... it was all the basic guitar riffs and drum riffs I learned when I first started guitar, but it had that sound... that perfect head banging quality that those obvious chord changes have... and it seemed to write itself. She watched me assemble the heavy track and she sang her GUTS out, so hard that the microphone distorted when we recorded it. I heard it and made a face. “I sang it too loud! It fuzzed the microphone out! AW DAMN!” “I don’t care. It works. It’s perfect. That little distortion in your voice works... I don’t want to change it!”

“So we’re done?” she asked... looking excited.
“Yea... I’ll mix it later.”
By the time I had finished the words she had jumped on me full force and straddled me on the couch, kneeling over me, her head over mine, her breasts in my face... she pushed them into my face and rocked my head back.

“Whoa! Someone’s all hot and bothered!”
“I like this song! I want to live inside this song... now!”
I stood up with her, holding her legs while she straddled me... and walked her into the bedroom... and tossed her onto the bed... she landed on all fours and crawled towards me with a look of pure ornery lust, she was smiling, but she could have been bearing her fangs... raised up on her knees and put my hand under her skirt.
“Oh my god.”
“Yea... you do that to me.”

Kari and Sean - Addiction (some more of you) 2010
https://archive.org/download/PsycoMagnetWGuitar/Some%20More%20Of%20You%20w%20guitar.mp3

It was a night we never forgot. It was perfect. We did one of our best songs and had one of our best and sexiest time ever. I was concerned when I didn’t hear from her for over a week after that, though.
My days were filled with daydreams of her and our playful night... our music and the fact that we did great things... and we lived them. This could be a great life. She had the makings of someone I would never get tired of. The way we fit together in so many ways... so perfect. I wondered why she hadn’t called me. But she frustrated me a lot. I tried her, but didn’t get answer.

Finally two weeks later, she called me.
“Hello?”
“Sean?”
“Yea baby. You ok?”
“oooh... well, not exactly.”
“What’s wrong?”
“Well... Tony...”
“oh...?”

“Well... I’m sorry. I meant to call you sooner. Tony was so crazy and intense. I mean... he was so into me. I didn’t know what to do. He just sort of came over and he was being so sweet.”
“Baby... what are you saying?”
“I just never had a guy that intense before. I didn’t know what to do.”
“Yea? So?”
“He brought me flowers and was so sweet. And he would get jealous if I even looked at another guy. I liked it at first, but then it started to scare me. And he just started coming over all the time.”
“Ok”
“He just kind of started staying with me. And I was kind of swept up in the whole thing... and then I kind of felt trapped. But I didn’t know what to do.”
“Are you saying you’re getting serious with him?”
“I thought I was for about five minutes. He was going to put a different guitar part on the song he did and our song was on the computer. He played it. He wanted to know what it was. I told him it was a surprise. Because he saw the date on it.”
“You told him our song was for him?”“I’m sorry, Sean. I didn’t know what to do. He’s so jealous.”
“I see...”
“And then he asked me who did the guitar and the drums and the bass... I told him I programmed it all. And he didn’t believe me.”
“What happened?”
“He beat me. With a baseball bat. And raped me. He kept me captive for about 8 hours and then he beat me again and I got away...”
“OH BABY!”
“I’m ok! I’m OK! My parents came after him with a shotgun. He’s in jail now.”
“You’re ok??”
“oooh... well, not exactly. I had a torn cornea and needed surgery. I had a concussion and other things... but I just got out of the hospital.”
“awww baby!”
“Can you come see me?”
Sure baby. I’ll be over in an hour.

“Thank you, Sean. I’m Sorry...”
“Don’t be sorry... you’re my angel. You’ll be fine. I’ll see you as soon as I can get there”
“OK. Thank you, Sean”
I sped over as quick as I could. She opened the door for me before I got to it. And I hugged her.
“ow”
“Oh! I’m sorry!”
“It’s ok. I’m so glad to see you!”
“I’m glad to see you! Your poor eye!”
Her eye was already partially healed, but showed reddish discolor and was a little misshapen... my heart was beating out of my chest.
“I can’t believe it!”
“It’s ok, Sean. I was stupid for letting it happen.”
“Baby, it’s not your fault!”
“It kind of is. I knew he was a little crazy. I shouldn’t have let it go on so long.”
“Sweety. I’m so sorry”
“It’s ok, Sean! It’s over. I just want to forget it. I’m just glad to see you.”
She was talking very calmly. Like she was trying to ease my worry. “So are you gonna be ok?”
“I’m fine! My eye is a little messed up. I will probably get most of my vision back, but for now, it’s really fuzzy”
“Oh baby!!”
“It’s ok! Come here! I missed you!”
I came to her and held her.
“This was just a dumb mistake, and he’ll be in prison for a long time, they said. I have to testify, but I don’t mind. What an asshole.”
“I can’t believe you’re so casual about all of it.”
“What can I do, Sean? I lived. I should have just told him I wasn’t interested, and broke up. He was such a sweet talker though. And intense. I guess crazy is the word. But let’s not talk about it anymore. I’ve been thinking about the last time you were here so much.”
“Yea... I have too. That was probably our best night so far!”

“It was. Wanna relive it?”
“You mean now?”
“Of course!”
“I-...I... I wouldn’t think you would want to be touched after that?”
“Sean... it wasn’t all that. I mean, yea, he raped me and beat me, but we were already having sex. I mean... it wasn’t fun! But it wasn’t that kind of trauma that people talk about. He wasn’t a stranger. Let’s just say he was the worst lay ever, and his foreplay SUCKED!”
“You’re something else... baby. I can’t believe you... Are you sure?”
“I’m sure. You’ve never hurt me. You’ve never scared me. You’re gentle and you’ve got a pure heart. I know there are evil bastards in the world. I’m not surprised. I kind of go for bad boys for some reason. You, being the exception. I got off lucky. He’s the one that’s gonna get raped! hahah. You know what they do to rapists in jail?”
“huh... yea.”
“Just be gentle with me. I’m a little sore”
I wanted to cry. I could feel the tears coming... but I pushed them back. If she was ok, I could be... but I think I was more traumatized than her... or at least it seemed like that. Tony got ten years. She showed up and testified in court and went back each parole hearing to make sure he stayed as long as the sentence, but he eventually was released after 8 and did the same thing to another girl two months out of prison. He’s went back and Kari testified again with the girl who he raped the second time and he’s in for a long time now, to this very day and for years to come.

I was blown away by Kari’s toughness. Her ability to compartmentalize her pain and trauma. I made soft love to her that night and held her for hours. I wanted to tell her that I loved her. But I didn’t. I never knew if that was what she wanted. I think she knew. She had to. She called me her music man. And I called her my songbird. I wondered what life would bring to us. If she would be ok. If she would love me. If she would let me love her. If she would break my heart. Sometimes I wondered if she even knew what she was doing. But I guess I would be around for whatever she decided. I loved her. There was no denying it. But I wasn’t ready to tell her.

We saw each other steadily for a while and it felt nice. We were hanging out one night and she told me another guy had hit on her at the same gas station that she met Tony at. She asked “What is it about me?” “Well, for starters, you’re breathing!” “Haha... but seriously?”
“You’re very pretty, baby. Your devastatingly pretty. And you have this vulnerability. You’re approachable. You’re catnip to me. You turned me on the first time I saw you, and that rarely ever happens to me.” “So I’m a dude magnet!”
“You’re a fucking PSYCHO magnet, apparently!”
“Haha... you’re not a psycho!”“Yea, but how many others were?”
“Yea... pretty much all of them.”
“*You’re just a PSYCHO MAGNET!!*” I sung...
She looked at me... hearing what I just heard.
“Are you thinking wha-”“YES!”
We were driving from my house to hers. She had stayed with me the nite before and we were headed back, and hours trip. By the time we got back to her place we had the lyrics written out and I was playing the beat on the steering wheel as we drove, giving it my interpretation of a techno beat. She programmed some keyboard sounds and we worked out the song structure and a few hours later... another great song that we lived. And another frenzied night of sex and intensity with my beautiful, sober, talented girl. It was 2011 now and our lives were growing together. There was no hurry, though. We weren’t going anywhere and I didn’t want to rush her. Maybe we both had some things to figure out. But for now, we were living a wonderful love affair set to our own amazing soundtrack. One that I was pretty sure the world would know some day. The stories behind everything were real and our lives were nothing short of interesting... if not a little insane. I loved her. She knew that. Surely.

Kari And Sean - Psycho Magnet (2011)
https://archive.org/download/PsycoMagnetWGuitar/Psyco%20Magnet%20w%20guitar.mp3

All the time, the years, our lives and the songs went ticking by...

and now it was 2011. 8 years after we met. About 2 years after we started our songwriting and things were ok. She had been sober for a long time! She had just graduated from drug court and my birthday was coming up. She asked me if I wanted to come over to celebrate her graduating and my birthday. I said definitely! I had come to really love our times together and when she was sober, we were a very compatible couple. She was beautiful and her mind and voice and body were all in great form. She was a goddess to me, but I didn't know after all this time what she really thought about me!

August 14th 2011 (my birthday).
I arrived at her house after dark, so it was a little late. She gave me a hug and a kiss... off to a good start. She said "I have some surprises for you"... "oh yea?" "yes... I can't wait".

I had brought some Bud Light Lime, even though she had not drank it for a while, but I still liked it and wanted to remind her of our first years together... and she asked me if I could bring something fun to party with, as she had been sober for something like 8 months. I brought a few pain pills that I got at the bar and of course my guitars and pedal effects.

She led me out to the barn, where she had the golf cart they used to get to and fro over their large parcel of land out there. We both got in and she drove for a few minutes, in the dark moonlit night, out through the fields on the trail they had made years ago to run the dogs and get to the various areas, and came to a clearing where there was lots of tall grass... she pulled out a large, old, hand-made quilt and laid it on the grass. The moon was huge and bright and lit up the field with seemingly brilliant white light. We lay down and looked up at the sky and sipped the girly beers... I pulled out the tiny pills that I had paid dearly for... "what are those?" "I don't know, but they're supposed to be good... they're expensive at least!" so I popped mine and she chewed hers up... and we lay there cuddling and touching and stroking each others hair... and then we kissed... and my stomach had butterflies again, like in the old days... and the butterflies were going crazy!

They were absolutely NUTS! And then I jumped up and walked a few feet away and hurled everything I had eaten that day in one go! And then I heaved a few times... then I came back and had a few sips of beer. “What happened?” “I don’t know... it just came on all of a sud”- and then she was up... running a few feet in the other direction and the SAME THING happened, although not as quickly... she panted for a while... said she was ok... and then “wait... nope”... although it was kind of cute when she did it... somehow! “What the fuck!” she said... “what were those?”
“I’m not sure... we can look them up on your phone, maybe?”
She looked them up and it turned out they were Dilaudid! Basically one of the most powerful opiates sold in pill form! After the yakking incident, our stomachs calmed down and the opiates made us warm and fuzzy and a little bit sweaty, but we managed to get through some clumsy love-making, in spite of the sexual side-effects of the pills... it took a little time and coaxing, but when I was with Kari, I was relaxed and completely aroused... in body and mind. Anything was possible with her.

We lay on the quilt looking up at the sky, naked and wrapped in the quilt to keep the bugs off... and unable to keep our bodies from touching... our hands from stroking... just feeling as blissful as could be.

The moon was so bright... as we lay there with the sound of the frogs and the creatures of the night keeping us company... Kari sat up suddenly and said “I hear my friend!”
“What do you mean?”
She stood up, her beautiful naked curves showing in the moonlight... and yelled out “WHOOO HA WHOOO”... and off in the distance a barn owl called back to her.
“Did you hear?”
“Aww... that’s so cool”
“WHOOO HA WHOOOOO!!!”
And he called back.
“You better be careful... you’re gonna get his hopes up!”
“Oh yea?”

“Yea... he might think there’s some incredibly hot chick over here.”
“Oh?”
“Yea... he’s probably thinking there’s some super hot chick here, who’s talented, with an incredible body... beautiful big owl eyes. A sweet owl face, who would give him the best birthday party in the woods he’s ever had.... Maybe even the love of his life.”
“Yea? He thinks that?”
“yea... but what does he know, he’s just a dumb owl.”
She smacked me on the leg and smiled... and leaned in for a deep long kiss.
“whoo whoo” I whispered... like an out of breath, extremely aroused owl.

She said “I have another surprise for you...”
“you’re kidding... you mean there’s more? You know, this was the best birthday ever in my life, so far. I-... thank you.”
I was going to say “I love you”... but I didn’t. We cuddled a little longer then got dressed and took the ride back to the bunkhouse. We walked inside and the recording rig was set up and she pulled out a piece of paper and on it was the title “Secrets”.

It was a song... for me. We had done many songs, and some were involving me in the lyrics, some were certainly about Ned, as he was still a fixture in her mind, but we had collaborated on so many, it was hard to say who meant what... but this song told the story of the time when we were just friends, some time back, and the sexual tension that was there the whole time... I thought it was purely a one-sided thing! Apparently we were both feeling it. The only thing missing, as was missing from the other songs we wrote, was love. It wasn’t a love song. In fact, it was a rockin’ SEX song, which I guess I’ll take! It even goes as far as to say “you’re making me so infatuated... but I think love is overrated!”

Fair enough... I was kinda glad I didn’t say it earlier... and it being my birthday, she would have felt some obligation to say it back to me... I

decided she would have to say it... I would never cave to pressure. It was her ball game, and we both knew it!

So we worked on the song tirelessly from about 10PM to 3:30AM... I tried to throw down some rhythm parts and lead parts, but they were a little trite and uninspired... but all in all, it was a decent song with good music that we wrote and her sexy-ass voice singing those words about us. I couldn't ask for a better birthday, even if I spent almost six hours working on my present... and then later on, after the Dilauded had worn off mostly, we had some more incredible sexy-time, very uninhibited and with her a lot more involved in foreplay... enjoying my body, something that wasn't so much a part of our dance up 'til this point. I pointed this out to her... "you mean I never ***DID THAT*** before? huh... maybe I was shy... I love ***DOING THAT!***" (I cleaned up the language a LOT! LOL)... Afterward I put my hand on her breast and felt her heart... I put my head there and listened to it pounding away as she stroked my hair.... as the events of the evening were etched indelibly in my heart-drive...

The song was too big to mix on her little computer. We agreed to come back to it and somehow get it on my pro-tools system at my house, where I had a big-ass MAC system that could throw around 24 tracks like they were nothing... but that never happened... and after a while, we forgot the song even existed... so many other songs were done and this night's song just somehow slipped our minds. I found it recently, as I was going through her things... her computer hard drive had it hidden in another file for another song... and I looked at it and wondered what it was... "Secret"... sounds like something I needed to hear! I actually had little memory of doing it, after all the other songs we did... so I checked the date on the pro-tools file and did a double-take "oh my god!" and the memories came flooding back! I remembered the night, the golf cart ride and the sexy time... but the song had slipped my mind for over 8 years! I quickly tried to mix it on her computer and quickly realized the reason it never was mixed was because it was TOO huge of a file... so I bounced the whole file over to a thumb drive and onto the MAC... and a new Kari Jo song was born! Everyone was

amazed to hear the story and the new song that came from it. It was my birthday present from happier times... finally coming to me. Thank you Kari, for this night, this song, and the love that we made. We were both in love, but hadn't dared to say it yet.

The next year was packed with the new reformed AB band gigs, and recording sessions with the Kari... She asked me if she could bring Lisa over. I told her that would be cool. I knew it was her only good friend at the time.
Kari had been coming to my place for a while and we would hang out and listen to music and play songs together. We also had gotten into partying together. It seemed harmless at the time. I would get a little blow and a pain pill. We would sniff a few lines and she would chew up the pill and stick her white tongue out at me. We did this for a while, and sometimes we just hung out with no party favors. But she wanted to show Lisa a good time, so I had some blow for all of us when she got there.

I honestly thought doing blow would be a step in the right direction for Kari! And honestly, it wasn't that bad. I told her it was a way for us to party a little, have some fun and not get stuck in some cycle of addiction. I never had a problem with blow… and I told her if we didn't smoke it, we would likely be ok. I had been doing it off and on for years and never felt the need to do it all the time.

So we did that for a while and mainly it was like I said. I'm not saying that it's a good thing… but where she had been was so much worse. So we were hanging out, the three of us. And Lisa was cool and charming, with a southern drawl and a very mellow vibe. She was a good friend to Kari… and her mom was similar to hers… overbearing and negative. So we all had a nice night together, but at the end, Kari had to take her back home and couldn't stay. She lived next door to Kari… which in that part of Missouri, was about two miles away, and they had to drive an hour back to Missouri. They were riding back, a little high from the blow… and she asked her;

"so what's the deal with Sean? You two look so cute together… and he seems nice… smart… talented… you two sound awesome together when you sing!"
"I know… Sean is the love of my life, Lisa."
"And?"
"And… he's too good for me. He sees what no guy has seen in me, besides Ned. And we've already been together longer than me and Ned… he won't take my shit and calls me out when I lie… I'm not just a pretty face or a good singer… he cares, and… I don't deserve him. I'm too fucked up."

“So have you told him everything? Does he know about Ned?”
“He knows that Ned and I were engaged. He knows that he died. I told him that he died before we met. I didn’t know how to tell him that he just died two years ago. I know he thinks I’m crazy, grieving about a guy that I never even mentioned before… and of course, I am… I just didn’t know how to say it. You know I got pregnant the last year that Ned was here? I told him, but I didn’t tell Sean. And I think Ned knew it wasn’t his.”
“Oh, Kari… you think he knew?”
“yea… he didn’t believe me. He didn’t say what he didn’t believe. But I got a test to show him. And he just said ‘I don’t believe you’”
“So you think he knew it wasn’t his?”
“yea… I think”
“So what happened?”
“I lost it. I was going to get an abortion… but I lost it. It’s probably just as well. I’m pretty sure it was Sean’s… it’s just another thing that makes me feel like a complete low-life. That Sean... he can do better”…
“So what’s gonna happen? He wants you. He knows a lot about you. He deserves to have you and know all of these things…”
“I’m going to be good enough some day. I’m gonna get this crazy shit behind me and we’re going to be together… at least, I think so. Unless he just gives up on me. He’s been close to that. I don’t know why he’s still around after all the crazy shit I’ve done. I love him. But I haven’t told him. I’m pretty sure he loves me too. But he’s scared to say it. It’s just how things are, for now… but something will happen, eventually. He’ll probably just get tired of my shit and dump me. I deserve it…”
“I don’t think so, Kari… I see it too. He’s way into you. He’s giving you the space you need… it’s a good thing. You’re lucky. Don’t fuck this up, darlin!”
“I fuck everything up, Lisa.”

Lisa told me about this 11 years later. After Kari had passed. She was the one person I talked to, to try and make sense of those early days and it helped me. If only to understand what was going on. I understand Kari’s confusion and even her self-destruction. I’ve felt it too… so much... since she’s gone.

A few years later, Lisa moved away. She was Kari’s only real friend at the time. She recorded a song with me for her. It was just something we threw together at the beginning of another session, but it’s sweet and shows who Kari was. And how sweet she was if you were lucky enough to be her friend. This is her spoken word and music piece for Lisa.

https://archive.org/download/PsycoMagnetWGuitar/lisas%20theme.mp3

October 2011.

Kari had been mostly sober for over a year. Sometimes we partied, but mostly we were good and I was trying hard to show her we could have a fun time without doing some kind of stuff. We were comfortable enough around each other to not need it, and had been together for 8 years. In the years I had known her she had really changed. She

seemed younger than when I met her! She often asked me how I put up with her in the old days... that she acted so dumb and crazy. It was kind of true... we were closer than ever, but we weren't a couple. Sometimes we talked about it, but there were things that kept me from taking that leap... something would always happen that pushed me back from the brink. After 8 years, you would think we would have figured most of this stuff out, but the dynamic of our relationship was always changing... We were best friends... with benefits. But there was always more. I wanted more. She wanted more. It makes me crazy to think about it. I didn't think she felt those things for me, and more than that, I worried that she would break my heart. I didn't tell her this, because that would let her know that she had that power and I wasn't ready for that, either! I guess I was being a dude... but typically I'm NOT a dude... a strange thing for a guy to say, I know... but I'm just Sean. The kind of guy that is fearless when it comes to showing his soft side... ok, sure... my feminine side. She always said I was the most manly guy she ever knew, because I wasn't scared to be whatever I felt like at the time. I'd like to think she was right.

She had a job as a medical assistant at a place called Pony Bird, which was a home for chronic cases... people who were tragically disabled and had to be institutionalized. But she loved them. She talked about her patients all the time, and even had pictures of her favorites, even though that wasn't allowed. She had such compassion for these people and I saw another side of her that I adored. She hadn't been playing in a band for a while, but we talked about it. She was content to record songs with me and pick up the odd gig that I would book for us at a small club. Sometimes we would sing at kareoke nights or jam sessions. She told me that she was teaching a music class to her kids at the home, the ones that were capable of doing it, and they loved it! They loved HER! She showed me the birthday card they all signed... and a recording of all of them singing a song she had taught them. She used the pro-tools program that I had given her to make a professional recording of them and their parents thought she was amazing. Like the times we sang at the nursing homes. I was really proud of her and her gigantic heart.

October 11th, 2011 around 2pm.

"Hey baby!"

"Hey there!"

“I was just riding my bike and of course I thought about you, because of all those times you tried to get me to ride with you. You should see me go up those hills now! I’m really starting to like the bike!”
“I was thinking about you today. Kinda miss you. We need to get a gig together and record.”
“Yea, sorry, I’ve been busy at this job, this week. I’m off tonight, though.”
“Cool, I have a few ideas.”
“You always do! I don’t think we’ve ever recorded one song that was shit.”
“Yea... well, you have a way of saving a session and making a shit song sound friggen great!”
“Aw man... I’m so bummed.”
“Why?”
“I broke my vibrator!”
“awww! So THAT’s why you called me!”
“Haha! No... well... maybe, now that you mention it! haha”
“I knew it!”
“If I come over, can you do me a favor and take me to Pet Smart? My ferrets need some medicine and we don’t have one here.”
“Sure! Oh, and you know what’s next to pet smart?”
“what?”
“Pure pleasure! The sex shop!”
“Oh REALLY??”
“yea... so I guess we oughta stop by there too... and you know... buy some sex!”
“You don’t have to do that, Sean”
“Well... since we don’t live together, I don’t want you to get desperate when I’m not around!”
“aww... you’re so nice!”
“Yea... just don’t get anything that will put me out of a job! I feel like I’m buying you my replacement!”
“No... nothing compares to the real thing, babe.”
“good!”
“Unless... do they make a vibe that... you know... has stuff come out?”
“hahah... probably! I think. But god knows what!”
“Good point!”

“So I’ve been thinking... we should start playing these songs out that you and I recorded. They’re actually great. And if we played them we’d get better at playing them and we could make more songs... basically I want to get you in my band!”
“I’m gonna start soon. I can’t not play out. I just feel really self conscious... I gained almost 30 pounds after rehab, maybe more, I’m afraid to weigh myself. None of my stage clothes even fit anymore. It’s really depressing, because I was skinny for so long, and I have so many cute outfits... AGH! I’m so pissed... that’s why I was riding my bike today.”
“Baby... I think you’re the sexiest girl I’ve ever seen. A lot people think that, not just me. You’ll be fine... you ARE fine. FUCKIN FIIIII-NE! YOU SOOO FINE!... Ok... we’ll hit Pet smart, Pure pleasure, and then we’ll head to the mall and find you a stage dress... cool?”
“Why are you so nice to me, Sean?”
“What? You want an actual reason? haha. I’m proud of you. You’ve gotten away from that shit and stayed clean... you’re like my best friend! And you know... all the hippie smut!”
“hahaha... hippie smut!? Is that what it is?”
“No... I just like the way it sounds... so hurry up and get over here. We got a lot of things to do... and each other!”

Kari often told me that benzo’s were the worst addiction she ever had. That it lingered more than an other. It was the one thing she couldn’t shake, no matter how long. Even a year out, she was still feeling the effects of that addiction. She took so much for a while, and I felt terrible for her. I didn’t know about addiction at this point in my life and I had a hard time understanding a lot of it, even though I tried and I listened to her. It was her first serious addiction and I tried to steer her away from it, even if we were still doing other stuff... like blow. We did that once in a while and usually with a few pain pills to take the edge off. Just no benzo’s. And she was doing ok. We were rock stars and we wanted to live the part, now and then and have some fun... Stupid as that sounds... and I was someone she could have fun with, without letting it run the show. I wouldn’t let her spiral down like before. Not on my watch. She was really such an amazing girl, especially when she was sober and feeling everything. She was sweet and

shy and a little insecure... like someone who had been a stranger in her own skin... and she had put on a few pounds, as is common to folks on the mend, but she was adorable... I endeavored to make her feel like a princess again. I took her to the mall and bought her a stage dress that she still has here, and we went by Spencers' gifts and I found some fake poo!

She followed me in and looked at me like I was crazy.
"Why the hell did you buy fake poo?!"
"EVERYONE NEEDS FAKE POO! You'll see... this will be the best $5 I ever spent!"
We then went to pure pleasure, and bought some adult toys, a nice new high RPM gold toned vibe and a bottle of warming gel-lube... and then to Pet Smart for ferret medicine and food.

While she was looking for her ferrets' stuff I put the fake poo in the large bulk cat litter bin. An employee came by and walked past it... got about five feet away and stopped dead... turned around and did a double-take and said "AW, HELL NO!" and went to get his co-worker... she came over, "OH MY GOD!!!" And so ran and got ANOTHER friend, and when they all came back, IT WAS GONE!
Now we're over in the ferret isle holding our stomachs! Laughing so damn hard... they then went and got SCOTT, the manager to come over... and we heard the girl ask him... "Scott?... Hey Scott?"
"yes?"
"Did you take that poop?"
"uuuhh... uuuhh... You're asking me if I pooped?"
"Noooo! haha!... the poop that was in the litter bin... did you take it?!"
Scott was kind of put off by this line of questioning... apparently he had heard correctly...

"Uh, no... I didn't take any .... POOP"... the four of them all looked very confused.
"Oh! RAY!... Ray saw it first, right, Ray??"
"yeaa! It was a poop in the bulk litter bin!"

“I didn’t see it.” Said Tom, the other employee...
“Yea! It was GONE when Tom looked!”

“Have there been any animals in here?”
“NOOO! That’s the weird thing! Did something sneak in here and poop in the bin?”
“And then take it back?? Come on!”
“There was POOP in that bin! I’m serious!”

Kari and I made our way up to the cash register and waited for them to finish their talk, trying to keep straight faces, our lips pursed together to stifle ourselves. Finally the girl came up and was still looking concerned and confused... you could tell the wheels were still turning in her head...
I paid her and as we walked out I reached in my pocket and pulled out the fake poo...
"oh... sorry, I think I dropped this earlier"... and we walked out with the girl screaming "OH MY GOD! YOU GOT US! RAY! RAY! It WAS FAKE POOP!!"
“You kiddin??”
“Scott!! it was fake”-
-and the door closed behind us.

Kari was laughing her head off... and it was the first time in probably years I had seen her so happy... It was so nice to hear her laughing... bursting into spontaneous snickers every few minutes as we drove back... we came to my big, familiar old house and goofed around and played guitars for a while.

I pulled out my video camera and filmed her. I rarely ever took pics or movies of us, because I was bashful about pictures, unless I was playing on stage... and even then it was hard for me to watch... And she was too, but I couldn’t resist how cute and happy she was... and she played it up for me. The one person in the world she would trust to film her... not thinking anyone would ever see it. And it’s her. The girl I loved even back then. It

was obvious. And it's the girl no one will ever know or see like this. And that's why it's here. I've thought about it, and it's too cute to not be in the book. It's only 40 seconds, and it is little adult in theme... and she would probably hate me for it. Not because of the adult theme, because she was chubby at the time. She lost a lot of weight later and her face slimmed a lot... she wouldn't give a shit about the sexual content. She was an open book about that!

In fact, it was a few years later, I was having a sexy talk with her and how good our sex life was. And she was telling me about every bad lover she had ever had... I told her that it was more than just sex with us. We were close. Very close. She agreed. We loved each other, but we hadn't said it. I watched our film so many times, I know every moment... It was ten years ago, and we were past the point where I was "dude" and now I was Sean, or Baby... and she was Kari or Baby... I hear myself talking to her in that video and calling her baby and I think wow... It's obvious these two people love each other, why aren't they saying it? She once said to me,
"You're like the only guy I've known that doesn't watch porn!"
I told her "But I DO!"
"You do not!"
"I watch ours!"
"Oh yea! Is it that hot?"
"It's fucking academy award winning!"
"I've never seen it"
"Do you want to?"
"No... I don't wanna see my fat ass. I was fat back then."
"You're the sexiest girl I've ever seen. And we were so cute."
"I guess I do want to. Just don't say anything"
We watched it one time. And she was obviously turned on. She told me "yea... that's not even porn. That's just love. Two people completely hot for each other and into each other's pleasure."
"So you see! How could I watch any professional porn actors after that? It never gets boring to me. It's the only thing I know is 100% real and that's what gets me off..."

It breaks my heart every time I watch it. No one will ever know the person I knew... She was just for me and I was her biggest fan, and she was mine. We connected on a level that few people get to and I “got” her. I’m glad I helped her realize that there was life after Ned and her addiction. That life goes on and she could have what she wanted, laugh and love again and not have to settle or grieve for the rest of her life. It’s hard to imagine that we weren’t a couple, yet. We weren’t even exclusive. I remember thinking... if she would just say right things to me now I would jump in with both feet... but that would be a few years off. For now, we were lovers and best friends. But we were always Kari and Sean.

After we made our little movie, we wanted to record something. I suggested we do something sexy and she agreed. We didn’t have anything written at that time and I suggested we do “Satisfaction” by the Stones. She seemed a little down on the idea. I told her that I had an idea for a new arrangement and had pictured her singing it. That she could sing that song so well. That basically Jagger had no business singing it, he was a man, and probably got more sex than anyone on the planet back then! She had more experience with bad sex and as a woman... she had every right to sing it... and to sing those words with pissed off, sexy, authenticity. I told her we would update it... there would be some f-bombs, and the sexual language would be more explicit... it would be more punk and more hardcore... she started to warm up to the idea. Then I laid down the music tracks and she was into it full-throttle. So here it is... my sexy girl and our work from this night, that’s forever etched into my mind.

Kari and Sean - Satisfaction (2011)
(click the link below for streaming audio. It’s awesome.)
We really started to click that summer of 2012. She came over often and we played gigs and recorded other songs... I even asked her to move in with me at some point and she said she would love to. I even asked her mom, though she didn’t seem to care.

I told her I wanted to ride bikes with her, so she brought her ten speed over and we rode around for a bit, but she was very bad at it. She fell and couldn't keep up and was generally miserable the whole time... I cooked for her and she cleaned my often messy house and stayed for days, even weeks, and later in the summer I applied for re-financing on my home, because I had been paying on it for some 25 years and figured I could get the payments lowered. This was during the time when everyone was feeling the pinch of the recession. When I got the new paperwork, the bank had pulled a fast one on me. Because my credit wasn't as good as when I bought the house, they actually raised my interest rates and DOUBLED my payment amounts... I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I fought and fought this, talked to real estate attorneys, but no one was able to help... and later that year, I faced the certainty that I would lose the house.
I called Kari and told her and she was upset, because we had talked about her moving in, but now things were all screwed up. I would have to find a new place, and Kari loved that old house and all of our history that we had lived there.
"I'm so sorry Sean. They say that moving, or losing a home is the most traumatic thing next to death!"
"I've heard that too. It seems that way. I love my old big box of a house. We've had so many good times here. Fuck! I'm gonna fight it. I'll have to move, but I'm still gonna fight it. What they did was wrong."
"Do you want me to help you move?"
"I'll have some help, but yea, if you want to. You know you have a ton of stuff here, too!"
"Oh yea! That's true... well... give me a call when you know more."

I started cleaning and hired a large industrial dumpster to throw away all the things I didn't need or had no room for in the new, smaller house that I would be living in. I called Kari, but she never called me back. Soon it was moving day and I hadn't heard from her in weeks. I was upset and hurt at what appeared as her abandoning me. I was sad and missing her, and moving out of my house that I had lived in since I was a kid. I really needed her. When I came to her collection of clothes, her thigh high boots... her ten

speed... I carried them out and thought for a moment. And then chucked them all into the big dumpster outside the house. Maybe it was time for a new girl, too.

After I lost the house, I found a small rental property out in the country and moved in quickly. I started to make money again through my on-line sales and was doing ok. But I hadn't heard from Kari in a while. Just weeks ago we were talking about her moving into my old house, but now it seemed like my new new life at my new house would be with a new girl as well.

I moved and was settled in the new house for only a few days when I fnally got a call from her. I wondered what she would say about the time that had passed.

"Sean"
"Yea, hey stranger"
"Can you talk?"
"uh huh"
"Sean... I'm freaking out. And... I don't want to live anymore..."
"baby, what's wrong?"
"I don't feel connected to this world anymore. I've been in a deep deep depression for the last few weeks. I feel like I'm BAD... that i've been a bad person for so long... that i'm just made that way... and sometimes I feel like it's not me... that the world is just evil and I'm just adapting... I don't know... i'm confused, sad... and I don't feel like anyone in this world knows me or connects with me... you're the only person I can call a friend and I don't even know how you feel about me. And I've been kind of shitty to you... I don't know why you put up with me! I mean... I really like you... but I haven't even let you really know me. I'm worried that if I ever let you know me, that you would just want to get away... and I don't know if I want to even do this anymore..."

"oh baby... are you ok? are you on the benzo's again? I only ask because I know how those chemical reactions can mess with your brain"

“yes. I never stopped, Sean. I started right away out of drug court. Just a few at first... but I never felt right, even a year later... I’ve been trying to stop for a few weeks... I’m so tired of being fucked up, but it’s all I know now... and I’m sick of it. I want my life back... I want my brain back. I want to be my old self again. I don’t understand how I can want it so bad, spend a year and a half sober, and then fall right back again. I’m so fucked up. You know... I’ve kept myself numb for a reason, and when I stop, those reasons always come back... and it’s worse every time. I really feel like I’ve messed things up so badly... it’s time for a do-over!”

“Oh baby, I know... listen... you’re easily one of the best people I know... I don’t know if I matter to you, if I figure into your plans at all”-
“you do Sean”
“ok, well, good. I figure you call me when you’re sick of living, either you’re going to blame me or tell me that I matter... I figure one or the other!”
She gave a weak laugh.
“have you talked to your folks at all?”
“they don’t want to hear about it. They just think I’m being dramatic. They just pretend that everything’s fine... but I really feel like I want to die! Shouldn’t they take that seriously? The girl who’s sliced up her wrists and who’s been beaten and busted and in deep shit for so many years... shouldn’t they care??”
I could tell she was upset... I think she was crying, but I couldn’t really tell. I honestly hadn’t heard her cry hardly ever... so it was a hard thing to gauge. Tears would come, but she never broke... and the few times she did, it sounded strange... even forced... she was so different than any other girl... so tough. Much tougher than I was. I was the girl in this relationship much of the time.

“Kari, baby... you need to figure out what you want... if there’s anything that you want... and you need to find that, or set some goal, and start doing it... one day at a time. Isn’t that what they say? It’s true... Maybe you should try to get a job. Just part time or something to give you a routine.”

“Sean... I’m a convicted felon! Do you know how hard it would be for me to even get a job at the quickie mart?? I’m so screwed... I did it all to myself. I’m addicted to benzos and my heart hurts all the time... I miss Ned... it’s all too much!”
“Kari. I would miss you so much. So much. It would kill me! You’ve shown me kindness and things that no girl has ever shown me... even ones that said they loved me”
“really?”
“Oh baby, yes! You’re so BEAUTIFUL... and I don’t mean that in a purely physical way... you have a delicate beauty that goes all the way to the bone! If I saw your skeleton, I would say WOW, that is the sexiest skeleton I’ve EVER SEEN!”
“hahah”
“I even hate to say you’re beautiful... just so you know... I feel it all the time. I want to say it, but I worry it’ll make me seem like the dog that I am... but I’m only human... and you know... a dog too!”
“hahaha.... aww... thank you for making me laugh!”

“Just a few months ago, you gave me the best birthday of my life. I’m actually afraid to tell you how much I like you. I wanted to tell you that night. I don’t even know if you would want that. I don’t want to rush things, but I know that you’re the one person that always puts a smile on my face, always! You’re the one person I want to tell when something good happens OR something bad. I mean, I have a friend, but he’s not there for me, YOU ARE. You’re the only one that’s there for me! You’re the most SANE and least judgmental person I’ve known. You have such a big heart, and you care about me and you listen to me. You remember things I’ve told you and whether you know it or not, you’re the smartest person I know”
“I don’t see how you can think that, Sean... you’re so much smarter.”
“No... I’m older and had more experience... but you are creative and you pick up on things I say so fast.”
“I’m sorry I scared you tonight...”

“You told me once that any time someone threatens suicide, that they are nearly always making a cry for help or attention.”
“so you listen to me too!”
“and I’m listening now... I hear you, and I want to help. I’m here...”
“Can I come see you?”
“Kari. Yes. I’ve missed you so much. I really needed you. I lost my house and I thought I had lost you too... I”...
The words stuck in my throat yet again.
I wanted to say them.
“you want to come out tomorrow?”
“yes, but I’ll need gas money. And you’ll have to send me directions. I have no idea where you live now!”
“Oh yea! You’ll love it. It’s a new place, but it’s cool. It’s not as comfy as my old place, and it’s a little smaller, but it’s nicely laid out. And there’s SO much room! It’s SO far out in the country. We could walk around naked... even outside! So you’ll really come?”
“Of course, any time you want me... “
“Can we make a day of it? I never see you in the daytime. We could try to ride bikes and I can cook.”
“OK. I’ll call you in the morning when I get up.”
“do you feel better?”
“a little”
“Well... I want you to be OK. There’s a whole ‘nuther chapter we have to write. Sex, drugs and rock & roll”
“yea, we have fun don’t we”
“we have more than that, baby”
“I’ll call you tomorrow”
“ok baby”

I got off the phone and called her parents. I talked to her dad and he seemed unfazed. "ah she's ok... she just gets dramatic... " "ok, but she was talking about suicide... and she's tried before, right?" "yea... I

guess... she's just acting out... she'll be ok" "can you at least talk to her for a few? Just see how she's doing. Just check?"
"Sure... "
"ok... I wouldn't call if I didn't think it was worth checking into"
"Ok.. I appreciate that...bye now"

And that was it. I asked her the next day if her dad had talked to her. She said he hadn't.

I had been mad at her, but she turned it around and made me feel like I was a jerk for being mad at her. She had been detoxing... Trying to get her life back. Depressed and trying to find a reason to live. And maybe I was the one tiny reason she needed. I just hope she never asks where her bike and her boots are. That will be hard to explain.

She came by the next day. It was early spring in 2011. I was out tilling the huge yard at my new place on Peila Hill, in Collinsville. She was awkward and still feeling the withdrawal from benzos, but she wanted to help me. I had a bunch of seeds and other things to plant. She looked at the ugly box of potatoes that I had. "what are these?" "Those are seed potatoes!... I walked into the farmers market and asked the lady how do you grow potatoes? And she pointed to the box of shriveled little potatoes and said, 'you can cut them into as many pieces as you want, as long as there's a piece of an eye on it, it'll grow into a new one!' I said cool! She said it works with pretty much everything... And she pointed to this box on the floor with little shriveled dogs in it... and it had a sign that said "SEED PUPPIES!"
"NOO!"
"ok... maybe I made that last part up"
"AWWW D'AAAWW! DAMMIT!.... why do I BELIEVE YOU when you say these CRAZY things?!"

“Because I say crazy things that are true all the time! I’m sorry... it’s a mean thing to do... but a little funny...”
“I’m so gullible!”
“so do you want to help me plant my garden?”
“I think that would be a great way to spend this day!”
“I have an extra bike here, too... I thought maybe later we could go for a bike ride... you always promised to go on a ride with me, at my old house... it’s kind of harder here, though, because we have all of these hills... but I know you can do it.”
“yea... that sounds great.”
She came over and put her arm around me.

“We’ve been together a long time. I know i’ve been a basket case. But i want you to know that you’ve been the nicest person I’ve ever come across. I didn’t believe it at first... so either you’re for real, or you’re the best faker I’ve ever met...”
“Aww, baby... I feel the same way. I often wondered what I mean to you. I’ve watched you stumble from one jerk to the next and all the while we’re still doing this thing that we do... whatever it is... and I am confused... I am afraid to tell you the things in my heart. And, you know, YEA.... you’ve HAVE been a total basket case!”
She pulled her arm off and smacked my ass...
“so... let’s plant some taters!”
“sounds like fun! ...or something...”

We worked for hours. Planting in the springtime sun. When we were done, we were a little tired, but I got the bikes out and we started down the long big hill in front of my house. I told her to be careful and ride the brakes. Not to go too fast until she got comfortable... but before I could get the words out I heard the scream and the crash... I looked back and she was tangled in the frame of the bike and in the middle of the road. I pedaled back to her and jumped off. She was

crying like a little girl. Her hands were skinned up and she had a nasty gouge from the pedals on her shins... “WHAT THE FUCK!” she whined. I helped her up and walked her and the two bikes back to the house with her limping behind, holding her hands up, which looked horrible. I got some ice for her hands and her shin... she was in pain, so I gave her a few pain pills that I had and her mood improved. “I’m sorry that didn’t work out... I’ll try it again sometime on more level ground... I think I wasn’t ready for that. Who’da thought that you could forget how to ride a bike!”
“I’m sorry too... I really was looking forward to it. You’ll get it. I guess we’ll have to figure something else to do inside...” I gave her a knowing look... she smiled. It had been a couple of weeks since we had seen each other... and I really had missed our sexual magic....

She started to come more often and I could feel myself falling for her again. We were different... and the new house I had found was nice enough and had plenty of room for the recording studio, plus the added bonus of no neighbors. I had picked up a dog at a gig at a campground and Kari loved him so much. His name was Darryl Hall. She asked me why I named him that, and I said “Because who would name their dog John Oates??” a joke that only she would laugh at! She was seemingly OK for the most part. We started riding bikes again, this time she took to it better and actually enjoyed it, when I found her a better bike to ride. I decked both of our bikes out with blue tooth speakers and lights so we could ride up to the dive bars and listen to music the whole way. Those were fun times. And I felt like things were finally coming into focus.

We started riding bikes more and she was still pretty bad at it. I put the bikes in the back of my truck and took her up to the bike trails in town. They stretched for miles in every direction and were paved and there was no traffic. She liked the peaceful trail and all the nature and the critters

scurrying out of the way as we rode along. We rode up to the next town and got some lunch and then rode back using another trail. I wasn't aware that this trail was still under construction. We had to cross a busy highway and it made her nervous. There was loose dirt on the other side where they had just made a new entrance to the bike path, but it wasn't paved yet and was steep with the freshly moved dirt. I told her to be careful as we went down the hill, but she didn't know how to use the brakes properly and used the front brakes... before I knew it, I watched her fall in slow motion... letting out a little scream as the back tire lifted up and the front tire dug into the loose dirt and she SLOOOOWLY fell head first over the handlebars and landed on her chest in the crusty gravel and dirt.
"AAAAAAAHHHH" She jumped up. She had a sexy low-cut sports bra on, and her ample, amazing breasts were covered with dirt and little pinprick cuts that were bleeding.
"Seaaan!!" She whined. She was so pathetic. She wasn't that hurt, but she was covered with dirt and the little cuts. We were just off the side of the highway and the cars were idling by in the rush hour traffic. "Oh baby! Ooooh! Ooooh! You poor thing!"
"I skinned my boobs! And they're all dirty!"
"oooh nooo!" I walked my bike up to her and put my hand on her head and kissed her cheek and kissed her poor skinned up girls. "OH MY GOD!" screamed someone from their car, either feeling sorry for her, or was stunned, seeing me kissing her ample breasts... she looked up at the traffic, for a moment.
"What can we do?"
"We have to get that cleaned up. That's the most important thing."
"I had a little towel on my bike, and a 1.5 liter of cold Evian that I had just bought at a gas station before we got back on the path.
"Come up here on the sidewalk. It's hard to stand on this loose dirt."
We laid our bikes down by the path and walked the few feet back up to the sidewalk next to the busy road.
"Oh Sean, There's dirt in my sports bra!"
"I know, baby. We'll take care of it. OK... now this is gonna be cold. When I count to three I want you to bend over and pull the bra out a little."

“Ok”
“One, Two, Three!”
SPLASH went half of the ice cold water onto her chest and bra as she held it open... and **SCREEEEEEEECH** went the tires of all the cars in the lane closest to us.
“ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME!!!” yelled someone else from their car.
“Sean... I’m so embarrassed.”
“Yea...UGH hahah... I’m sorry... but that was the hottest thing I’ve ever seen... holy shit baby!”
“It’s not hot! I’m hurt! ...and maybe a little hot... BUT MORE HURT!”
I took my towel and doused it with some more water and started padding her off, pulling her bra out and dumping some more water into it.
“That’s SOO COOOOLD!” She squealed.
“OH! THANK YOU SWEET JESUS!!!”... “TAKE IT OFF!!” Two separate cars yelled.
“Sean, can we please go back on the path!!!”
“Yes, baby. I think they’ve had enough. We don’t want to cause and accident. Or a heart attack!”
“I think you enjoyed that a little too much!”
“Maybe a little! hahah. I’m sorry...”
“It’s ok. I liked it a little too... aside from the pain. hahah”
“Yea... someone’s gonna have a story to tell when they get home!”
“Yea! I saw this girl flashing all the cars in the traffic and a guy dousing her tits with cold water!”
“yea! And she was pretty as a fucking angel! And had the best biggest amazing naturals I’ve ever seen! hahah. You’re gonna be famous.”
“Let me see the towel and the water... I gotta get a little more clean...”

It had taken us years, but we finally had a fun day riding bikes. Kari was still pretty shaky, but she held her own. She had wrecked all three times we had tried, but now that the worst had happened, she seemed to be more in control. We got back to the truck and went home. I cleaned her up better in the bathroom and things got way out of control... Her body was just too

sexy... and the fantasy of all the guys driving on route 159 that day was the one I was living that night. Life was good.

We went to my dive bar later that night and had some drinks. Partied like rock stars and the days passed by with us getting closer, acting like lovers and full of affection and... love. It was finally feeling like it was going somewhere. I was falling for her. But with Kari, that was only a matter of being around her. And I had never had her around this much. And she was falling hard for me too. She said to me one day, “I’ve never spent this much time with a guy... I mean, we’ve been together for 8 years... but I mean, every day. And it doesn’t get old. We don’t get on each other’s nerves! It’s awesome!”
It made me beam... and it was true. So true.

But in my first year there, something terrible happened. My back gave out. It was from a terrible injury I suffered at a gig four years earlier. When I went to get checked out, the Dr asked me “when did you break your back?” and I asked “Are you serious?!”... and he was. I had to think a moment... but then I remembered.

We were playing an outside gig in my old cover band and a state cop came up to us and said “you guys gotta pack it up, there’s a tornado coming this way”... and I thought he was joking... we were playing down in a river valley on the Kaskaskia River at an outside festival... and it was a calm sunny day, it was perfect! But then as the set neared the end, I saw the huge dark cloud coming down fast over the bluff and sounded the alert... “get this stuff broken down and in the trailer!”

We did what we could as fast as we could, but the rain came down fast and hard and the wind was ridiculous... suddenly I was the only one out there grabbing the gear and everyone had run for shelter but me! I only had one piece left, and it was a 350 pound. amp rack and I grabbed it firmly and dead lifted it with it between my legs... an awkward angle to hold it... and carried it about 40 feet to the trailer and put it in, and as I lifted it up into the

bed of the trailer, I felt a little give in my back... but... just as I did that a huge beer tent pulled up its' stakes and flew straight up into the sky!

I closed the doors, in the torrent of wind and rain and ran to the door of a bar where everyone had run into... I ran inside and pushed the door closed against the wind... and there were 500 people hunkered in this TINY bar, all looking like drowned rats!

There was about 2 inches of water on the floor and the room erupted in applause when I came in... a few people bought me drinks and said "that was CRAZY what you did out there"... my drummer asked me if I was OK... I said "NO... my back hurts a little." And I was laid up for over three weeks...

I went to the bar one time during that period and I was walking like a 100 year old man... I couldn't put any weight on my back... When I walked into the bar, a regular looked shocked "SEAN! WHAT HAPPENED?!?" I tried to walk it off... to ignore it... got drunk and tried to play a game of pool, but I couldn't. Then I was scared. I tried using my pool cue as a cane... and then... a cane as a cane and then BOTH, but it just hurt so bad I couldn't even walk with a cane AND a pool cue. It had bee three days and it had gotten worse. I didn't understand why it was so bad. I stayed in bed after that and didn't get up for anything but to use the bathroom, which required crawling and was extremely difficult in itself.

But it slowly got better and eventually I was back to work, but with a new nagging ache in my back that never completely went away... until nearly four years later, my L1, the first vertebrae in my back, had become separated from my spine and slowly pushed out of the muscle sheath that was the only thing holding it there... and it slowly migrated forward until it pressed up against my sciatic nerve! ... AND POW!!!

I was on stage one night and felt the stabbing pain that was like someone shocked me with a cattle prod! I thought for a moment I had a grounding issue with my guitar, but when the pain shot through again, I realized it was

something very wrong and left the stage to sit in a chair with my legs tucked up under my chin...

I went to see a pain doctor and he prescribed me some awesomely powerful pain meds. I had a TUB of these things at all times. I was going to a chiropractor three times a week to get therapy and traction treatments... basically beating my back and pushing on my pelvis to get the vertebra off my sciatic nerve... but the pain was ungodly. The specialist and the Chiropractor both told me I had a degenerative condition and that they could help in the short term, but eventually it would get worse and I could lose the ability to walk... AND, he added, “the use of your penis.” (he seriously said that). I asked him if it would get better and he shook his head no. “It never gets better. We may get it to move a little to get it off the sciatic nerve, but I’ve never seen anyone recover from this kind of degenerative back problem.”

I fell into a depression. I felt like an invalid. I couldn’t work and I couldn’t play... I was down and down hard... it was so amazingly painful, it felt like I had an open wound on my back that I could hear the bones rubbing together and the only thing that gave me relief was obscene amounts of pain pills... which I took... and eventually the therapy and the pills made it so I could move around a little better without screaming. I talked to my family... my mother and friends, ...and Kari. I said, I knew what I was doing, and basically I was becoming addicted to pain pills, but I had no choice... I was going to be a pill addict until I could get to a place where I someday could move without this ridiculous pain!
Kari had never seen me like this and I worried that she would just treat this like every other time I needed her and disappear, but things had changed. She told me she would help take care of me and started coming around more often. I tried to hide them from her, but eventually she saw the tub of pills and said “HELLO”... “oh fuck...” I thought... “just what she needs”...
“I’ve never tried THESE, but I’ve heard GREAT things!... can I please please please please please”-
“OK... stop... here...”

“JUST ONE?!”
“yes! just one! Try it... you wont want another one”...
I gave it to her and watched with dread as she started chewing up the big powerful pill. A little later, she was nodding and smiling...
“wow”...
“yea I told you”...
“no really... wow”....
“yes, I KNOW... they allow me to get out of bed, so don’t you like them too much... I actually need them”...
“wow”...
“yes, wow”...
“you wanna go on a bike ride? I wanna go on one!”
“yes, I want to... but I can’t. I have to do physical therapy all week and see if I will ever be able to do real work or play ever again, I’m terribly upset about this right now” ...
“wow...”
“ALRIGHT... YES.... WOW...”
It was bittersweet spending that time with her. I had always wanted her there, even talked to her mother before I lost my other house about maybe she and I living together. It’s insane that I was talking about living with her and we hadn’t even said we loved each other ...and it had been NINE YEARS!!!

Kari and I had been in each others’ live for nine years. We were “old” friends... we were more than that. There was history. She loved what I loved. But I hated that she was here now and I was in such pain. She helped me a lot. Cleaned my house and helped me get my work done and my orders packed. I worked from home mainly at this time. I got physical therapy for months and it started to work, though it just bought me a few hours of relief out of the day before the bones settled back to their bad place and I had to lay down with pillows under my back. But eventually with her help I started to improve. I started working more and playing the guitar again. I started playing with the soul group again, though often seated most of the show, something that bugged the crap out of me. And the pills were

strong and made me a little crazy... if I had a few drinks, I was loopy as hell!

Kari helped me mow my lawn, which was vastly huge, but I started doing that too. My garden that we planted had come up and she had tended to it as well. She was actually helping me and I felt grateful for her. Her company and her encouragement. I don't know if it was her training in the medical field, or that she loved me, or both... but she really turned it around for me. But she started to pick up my habit as well. I had no idea how many she was taking, because I was often in a fog myself, and there were so many pills it was hard to keep track. Sometimes there would be two tubs of the huge things.

Gradually I was able to start riding bikes again and started getting my strength back. My physical therapy had run its course and I didn't feel the bones scraping so much. It was painful, still, but not the horribly depressing pain that made me want to end my life.

Kari and I celebrated my progress. She was becoming my girlfriend and I grew to depend on her. I still didn't know what to call this. It seemed that she was finally getting over her problems with Ned... her grief. That we were clicking. We recorded songs and rode bikes and played the odd gigs together. She was my girl, and I was proud of her. This pretty girl who was talented and could sing... and she wasn't the trainwreck she had been the last 9 years. But she was taking my pills a lot. I didn't know this.

Shortly after this, my pain Dr was busted for over-prescribing... but that was the only reason I was going to him in the first place! I knew I was getting way too much, but I truly NEEDED them... I tried to find another Dr, but none of them would come close to the ridiculous amounts he was giving me. Stupid LAWS! So I lay in bed again... missed my physical therapy appointments and waited for the sweats to turn into nausea and horrible pain and the physical, mental and chemical depression... the nastiest detox there is, is from Roxys... and I've done them all. I was called to do a gig in

the middle of all of this, and I tried to do it, but I had to wear a brace and sit in a chair all night and have my gear carried in,... and it still was PURE TORTURE... I tried to stand and play guitar for a while, but I could feel the bones in my back rubbing and hear the grinding rough edges through my muscles and skin, and my skin felt like it was burning all the time from the pill detox. I was scared. It was as though my life was coming to an end as I knew it.

My detox grew worse as the week went on and I was nauseous and puking several times a day... when a stranger knocked on my door. A friend of a friend had talked to him and he took it on himself to come by. He was the boyfriend of a girl that I knew for many years... he said “I heard you’re not doing well and I think I may be able to help”... I said “oh yea... how’s that” and with that he threw a bindle of Roxy’s on the table. I knew what it was... he said “you’ll get more out of those if you snort them” his voice was low and slurred and he looked to be completely ripped... so I did as he said... And he was right! Snorting them was a LOT better!... he talked like a drug dealer might talk. Slow and deadpan, like he had a moth full of marbles, but straight to the point. He left me his number and walked out. The powder brought me instant relief and I started to work on-line and get some orders out. I got a fair amount of work done, and by crushing and snorting the pills, they lasted about 3 days. I called him back and he said he didn’t have any of the Roxys left, but he had some raw... I didn’t know what raw was, so he had to explain it. He said that it wasn’t as potent as the stuff i had, but it was a lot cheaper. So I said OK! Let’s do it! So started my first dealings with the dreaded “H”. And he was right... it wasn’t quite as strong (yea, pain pills can be stronger than street heroin), but it did dull the cluster of angry nerves in my lower spine and I felt a little stronger and had energy to spare... it didn’t make me sleep, it kept me up for days on end and I was super-productive and started making more money... I had enough for rent and for a generous supply of my new best friend! RAW!

It was summer of 2011. My band Alabaster Brown had broken up 3 years before, and I had fought with them over my intellectual material and won. I

had the name and was gigging with it regularly as well as with the soul band. I had a broken back, too, and was having to medicate myself heavily to play. I was still able to work and gig, and have a sex life... things weren't that bad. I was functioning. It was July, and i was playing at a little club called Johnny's Side Bar. The stuff I'd gotten was very potent and I had accidentally gotten very high. I didn't like to gig like this. It made it hard to concentrate, but I did my best. I didn't realize it, but I had a tell. I was touching my nose nearly constantly... sniffing and constantly touching it... it was weird. I had never done this before, and I don't really know why i was doing it that night, but I was. I was still able to perform well, but this new thing bothered me and while I was on break, a cute young couple came up to me and started chatting. The guy, named George, told me he thought the band was great and just as casually he told me he didn't have any cool friends who did the "H" here in town. I looked at him with surprise. He read me and said... "your nose, bra. the way you've been touching it and the way you act on stage... it's a dead giveaway"
"really??"
"yea! but it's cool... I don't think anyone else can tell. I just know because I've been there myself"
"huh... I don't like that... gonna have to chill out"

I got his number and he asked me to help him find some better dealers and I went on some runs with him. He came by often with his girl and I guess we became friends. We saw each other a lot at that time.

It was the next day when Kari came by. She was with some scummy looking people and she walked up to my door, meandering aimlessly along the way, as if she had forgotten where the door was... she was HIGH... so damned high... I was taken aback! Her pretty indigo blue eyes were little pinpricks and it was both beautiful and alarming.

I said "you are SO friggen high!"
She denied it, but the words came out comically slow...
"nooowI'mnoot"...

“yea... yea, you are... hmm... what are you on... “H””?
“what? why would you say that??”
“because your gorgeous eyes are pinpricks and you are literally standing there weaving back and forth... I can’t believe it... you’re on heroin”...
“I’m telling you i’m not high!” her voice raised to a monotone angry whine...
“yea... OK”...

I pulled out a bindle and made a little line... “what’s THAT?”
“the same thing YOU’RE doing, my dear”...
“really?? I want some!”
“you’ve had enough”
“come on! I’ve been good!”
“you’re never good... and when you say you’ve been, you’re usually lying!”
“c’mon Sean... that’s not fair...”
“what’s not fair??”
“nothing... you wanna go on a bike ride?”
“yes I would like that... but I don’t know if I can. Lemme see if I feel better...”
And I did... we rode our bikes into town, I bought her something to eat and we went by the dive bar for a few drinks and shot some pool. We rode back at around closing time, 1AM.. with our bikes all tricked out with music and lights...
“I can’t believe I didn’t think this was fun for so long... I’m getting so strong, I can ride up these giant hills! I LOVE riding bikes!”

“me too, babe. I’m actually having a nice night... I didn’t like seeing you so high though”
“I’m sorry... it was the first time I’ve done it. my friends that dropped me off do it all the time”...
“that worries me too”...
“so can we do a little now”...
“I’m really scared you’re going to go off the deep end with this stuff... it’s bad, Kari”
“It’s not fair that you can do it and I can’t!”

“life isn’t fair... you think it’s fair that I had a broken back and will probably spend the last part of my life in a wheelchair with a prick that doesn’t work??”
“I’m sorry. What can I do? Can I rub it for you?”
“you mean my back?”
“um... mmmaybe... but lemme try a little of yours... I want to compare”

FUUUCK...

“ok... but don’t make a habit of this. It’s pure evil and I know this. I just do it because I have no choice at the moment... I may die doing this, I don’t know... I don’t know how much my body can take”...

I put her out a small line and she snorted it up...
“yours doesn’t burn like theirs does”...
“that’s because it’s raw..”
“Raw?”
“yes, it’s pure, off the brick, with no cut”
“oh wow... that sounds great... it IS really good”
“yea wow...”
I had a gig the next night with the soul band at a fancy club in Ladue Missouri. A snooty town of nouveau riche snobs, but they were glad to have a real soul band there, instead of the regular fare of cheesy cover bands and it was our second time playing there. I was getting one of my large loudspeakers out and had a dolly that I used to make things easier on my back.

Loading the speakers was tricky, because I couldn’t use my back at all, but I had figured out ways of using my legs to lift them up and down and I placed the big speaker on the dolly in the loading ramp that led into the stage area and closed the door, and turned around to see the speaker and the large dolly rolling down the ramp towards a spotless top of the line Lexus... I jumped after it and landed on the concrete with a THUD and

stopped the dolly within inches of plowing into the shiny car that was worth more than my house.

I had hurt myself again.

Chapter 8

July 18th 2019

It's a thursday night and Jessie is coming by soon and we're headed to Joanie's Pizzaria for an open mic night. It was a place i had played once with Kari many years ago... I barely remember the gig... Kari has been gone for 4 months. I'm Still not sleeping, but I need to do something. To get out and play some music. I'm going out to play for her tonight. Jessie will be by soon and I'm having a panic attack. It's something that happens every day. Just another sign of this thing that's happened. Like having half of your soul ripped out without anesthetic after you've done nothing but anesthetic for 7 years. It's just a horrible thing... missing her. Absolutely horrible... the ache... just the thought... the words that pop into my head no matter what I do... "she's gone"... they aren't actually words... but that's what it is... this thing... "she's gone"... with a wave of dread and a useless push of adrenaline and... panic... and the shit practically squirting out of my eyes. If I ever am asked to play in a movie... I've got a great trick... I can cry on demand. Really fucking cry! Like... wanna see? and boom, my face reddens eyes full and dumping down my face... any time... I can be laughing my ass off, if that ever actually happens again... and you could say "Sean, I'll give you $50 to cry within the next ten seconds"... 8 seconds later that shit's coming down my cheeks and you're paying me.

I'm writing tonight, and I've written all day... which is hard. When I write this stuff, the tears come down my face the whole time. I actually get a little excited when it happens... because when I write in that state, the manic insane push and free word association... it's always the best, when I read it later on. And I've done a lot of that today.

... I gotta get it together before Jessie gets here.

Ten minutes later... she's here and she's amazingly bubbly and sweet. Making me feel better just to have her here. We're just about to leave and there's a IM from facebook that comes up and I tell her to wait.

“Is this Sean, Kari’s husband?”
“Yes.”
“My Name is Duane.”
“I can see that, did you know Kari?”
“Yes.”
“Ok...”
“I saw the picture of her on the musicians site and your message you wrote. It was heartbreaking.”
“Yea... it’s been really hard.”
“There’s something you need to know.”
“About Kari?”
“Yes”
“I probably already know it.”
“Not this... it’s something that I need to get off my chest.”
“Listen... I know everything about Kari... but if you have something that’s upsetting... do I need to remind you that I’m a grieving widower? That I haven’t slept in 6 months... so maybe you should consider if what you says will be troubling. I’m like 12 steps away from offing myself... so...”
“I know... I can see you love her. I feel so bad. I wouldn’t have done what I did... I’m so sorry.”
“Dude... seriously. You can just save it. It’s probably something I know. Seriously”
He goes on typing and I read what he has to say, and I knew what it would be. I type back,“Why would you tell a grieving widow that?? Are you out of your fucking mind?? What if I didn’t know?”

About this time Jessie comes up behind and reads what is making me so upset...
“Sean... what the fuck is wrong with this guy! He’s full of shit! He’s lying!”
“No babe... he’s not... he’s an asshole... but he’s not lying... I’ve been wondering with her being well known and me writing this thing and being so public about it... if someone wouldn’t come out of the woodwork like this low-life... now I know.”
“Sean... that’s so fucking horrible. It’s not true, is it?”
“It’s... yea... yea.”
I started to lose it. Jessie was about to lose it, but was kind of in shock. “Sean! Oh Sean... what kind of monster... fucking people! Fuck... really?

The messenger dinged.

“I’m so sorry. I would have never done it if I knew she had a husband and was committed like she was with you.”
“Yea dude... you’re so nice to say all this horrible shit, fuck you... just stop. You’re an asshole. You don’t tell someone this, when they’re grieving. I see your fake profile... so you’re telling me this anonymously. So you know what you’re doing is fucked up, so don’t bullshit me. You’re a fucking lowlife. I don’t know who you are... but fuck you. If I knew who you were I would take your brain out and play with it, while whistling a happy tune. You’re a lowlife and you got to have the thrill of a lifetime, taking advantage of a girl who needed money for drugs... and you got a bargain. But you’re still a lowlife. You’ll always be one... and I know my girl had problems... but she was on drugs. You’re a total piece of shit and that’s the way nature hatched you. You can tell your dowdy, frumpy wife or your sickly spawn some day, about the high point of your depraved existence. Good for you, now do us all a favor and die.”

I hit the block button and Jessie was looking at me with eyes that were searching me to see if I was ok. Knowing there was no way that I was.

“I was wondering whether I should write about it. I actually pictured something like this possibly happening.”

“You don’t have to tell me, Sean... I don’t have to know”
“It’s ok... it’s ok. It was a long time ago... not long enough... but long. I’ve thought about it, because I know there are some women out there who may be in the same position... and it’s something no one wants to talk about. Or admit to. At least, very few have. But I was thinking it would be something I might write about. Because the book won’t make much sense without it, and with all the shit that happened with us, that was the hardest to come back from. It was a big deal, Jessie. It was my angel... doing THAT... I couldn’t figure out why. It’s just crazy, still.”

“I’m so sorry Sean.”
“It’s ok... it’s ok. I worried it would happen. That if this book got popular and these lowlifes started popping up with the same story... that it could tarnish her name. That maybe I should tell it and take any power that these scumbags have... so if they ever did say anything about it, people would just hate them. Because it’s not something you admit to unless your a total piece of shit. I just wanna talk to

her. It's so hard. People coming out of the woodwork... people saying things about her, about us... about ME... horrible things. Lies and fucked up things... that are true. And I just wanna know why she left me here to face all of this alone without her! When it's so fucking hard!"

"She didn't mean to, Sean. She loved you more because of all of these things... because you gave her true love and a wonderful life, even in spite of these things. That you never let her go and never lost hope. I can't imagine someone loving me that much. I'm so envious of her."

"I just can't believe it's all gone. I can't fucking believe she left me after all of this."

2011

After I fell at the gig, I laid there on the concrete... my one hand still holding the dolly and unable to get up. I was there for about TEN minutes before a band member came out to see what was taking me so long. He rushed over and grabbed the dolly. I had them load in the rest of the gear in, even though they were all much older than me and almost as useless! I played the show on a stool... heavily medicated, and drinking as well... I was not myself. I called Kari and told her I had hurt myself. That I would be home later. I needed some help... I was sore and depressed. Worried that this would put me closer to being an invalid. I got home later and she was waiting for me. I walked in, wincing as I stepped and fell onto the bed in my room.

She came into the bedroom and rubbed my back for about a half hour. It was nice to feel her little hands on me and I stopped feeling sorry for myself for a while. Every now and then she would rub where my injury was and I let out a cry of pain... and she recoiled... "that hurts that bad?"
"I'm sorry, yes... there's nothing you can do about it... just avoid that area, please... in fact... just come here"
"I'm sorry I hurt you"
"it's ok, you make me feel really nice..."

... she laid down next to me and I kissed her hard, the way I knew she loved, and I had grown into... she looked at me with a look that I've never seen on her before. I would say it was love. It looked that way... we stared into each other's eyes for a few minutes... then we got closer. I could smell her hair and skin and the light Channel perfume from a day before. Mostly she was earthy and her natural pheremone was dizzying to me... and closer, skin touching skin, with small flickers of electricity everywhere we touched... and I could feel my desire rising up through the haze of opiates and affecting my body in spite of the heavy drugs... we made love for the first time in months and I wanted to cry. I had missed her and I had missed me, and I had missed sex... It had been so long since I felt this way... and it had been even longer for her. It was sad, because she deserved to be loved in every way, and I wanted to do it, but often it was difficult. It was a hard time and I didn't want her to follow me down this dark path that I was on... but I knew she would...

About this time, I had been looking for a roommate and a young guy came by. He had his boss with him. He was a recovering addict, but was looking to get his own place as he had a good job and wanted to rent the room. I thought it was pretty cool that his boss came with him and after some consideration I rented him the room.

Kari didn't like the kid. I really didn't know what to think. He behaved strangely and apparently he had known my dealer and they had been talking since he moved in. My dealer would come over and hang out with him and then take care of me too. About a few weeks later, he installed heavy padlocks on the doors to his room. Strange behavior.

Kari came over a lot during this time and she kept asking me what was up with the strange roommate. I told her I didn't know, but I was thinking about just getting the place to myself. I had been doing the stuff for a while and so had she. It really messes with your sense of smell and often you can't smell very well, but when you are coming down, you can smell WAY too much. I

thought i was smelling something strange in the house. She told me the same thing. What the hell was that smell??

One day when Kari was back at her house visiting her parents, I heard a knock at my bedroom window. It was a black man and he wanted to talk with me. I was a little confused and opened the front door to let him in and about EIGHT plain-clothed officers came in. They informed me that my recent roommate had a meth lab in his room and they were here to bust him. They told me they knew from their informant that I had no knowledge of this. They simply wanted some help getting the kid and getting the lab broken down and out of the house. I was panicked, because in my room, on a dish by my bed, was a large plate with lines of powdered raw on it. They asked me if I had anything they needed to know about. I told them about the plate and they took the powder off the plate and tucked it into an evidence bag. I thought my life was over. I was terrified. I asked them if I what i had could be considered a felony... they shook their heads yes. I remember I said “oh my god! I won’t be able to VOTE!”... and they laughed a bit. They talked amongst themselves for a few. I could tell they were torn about what they should do. I think they saw me for what I was. Someone who wasn’t a criminal... but had a serious injury and pain issues. They told me that the evidence they had needn’t be used... if I could just tell them when my roommate got home and arrange for them to get him. They told me to get help and not make them ever have to come back. And I couldn’t believe it. I had been spared the embarrassment of being busted. Of being a felon. I had somehow gotten lucky. But I had to deal with the other... they were going to leave, and I was going to call them when this piece of crap came back and then there would be a small army of cops here... my landlord would be called and people with chemical hazard suits would come and break down his meth lab... and I would have to explain that I didn’t know about it.
It turns out that my dealer... the guy I had been getting my stuff from, wanted to figure out a way to cook meth, and told the little shit about my room for rent. He gave him the money to move in with and likely would have given him the rent from the proceeds from the meth they cooked up in

that room when I was out playing gigs. It was a stupid plan. And they both got popped... and I got off scot free... but I didn't have a dealer now!

A little while later he came home. And the smell came back. He told me he had gotten diesel in his clothes at work that day (and in retrospect, I don't even think he was working!) and that he was going to have to burn some of his work clothes... he made a fire in my fire pit and started to burn some AWFUL smelling stuff... that would be later collected as evidence. The smell was horrible, with me detoxing inside. Soon after the cops arrived and grabbed him and it was a zoo there with the county task force, state and local cops, my landlord yelling at me and me sitting on a lawn chair in the front yard, in handcuffs to throw off the suspicion that I was involved in the bust. The cops told my landlord that I was innocent, and that they were just doing it for show, but he wasn't any less upset. I was forced to sit through the entire search and seizure to throw suspicion off of me. The kid also told them that I had nothing to do with it, which I was glad of... and after all of the events, feeling the sickness of the detox coming on and the shame of my own drug use, I started to cry out there in the yard. My roommate was already crying. They removed everything and thanked me for my cooperation, and told me to get help. Which I attempted to do. I called Kari and she came over. I didn't know where to go to get stuff now. She didn't either.

The next day I was at the gas station and was flagged down by an old school mate. His name was Ron Duba. I had known him since 6th grade. He had a hard childhood, having some early childhood sickness that left him completely bald. He had zero hair. Anywhere. I remember a 6th grade gym teacher looking at his eyes and remarking... "I can't believe it! I've never seen anyone without eyelashes!" I had just gone through the drama of having a meth lab busted up in my house and in the process lost my dealer and was ready to just stop the crazy shit... I was up at the gas station, feeling the effects of opiate withdrawal, but still managing to get through my day when Ron flagged me down. He was not doing well. He

was homeless and had no transportation. He said he had heard about the bust at my house.

He was the cousin of the kid that had the lab and was living there. He told me how stupid that was and wondered how I was doing. He had known about my pain problem and what I was doing for it, probably from his cousin, who knew my dealer. He said he had a bunch of numbers for dealers in St Louis and that I probably was getting a bad deal from Cody, who was an addict himself and probably wasn't giving me the best deal because of that. I said I didn't know if I wanted to do the stuff anymore... but he was convincing... he said I was going to go through hell, and if I could avoid it, it would be worth it.

I decided that maybe I would give it a try, as my back was still very sore and I hadn't slept in several days, partly from stress, and partly from detoxing. I didn't want to face the pain of my back and the detox, and I knew Kari was also probably feeling bad and I wanted to take care of her...

He called a few numbers and found a guy named Mitch. We went to him and I got my first taste of St Louis heroin... it wasn't what I was used to. It was sold in small gelatin capsules and was already finely powdered and mixed with dormin, which is a generic powder made of benadryl. We scored the pills and he was excited. "Duuude, these are awesome. Look at that color! See that brownish tint! That's some good shit!"

And it was! It was way better than the "raw" i had been scoring. It was a good deal too... I had been getting screwed by the guy who attempted to set up a meth lab with his friend at my house... which wasn't a huge surprise, really.

Ron was always coming to my house to see if he could talk me into a run. He would work on my truck for pills and do whatever menial labor I needed done, as I was content to work on my computer and make a living as I knew how. Ron was having a hard time with life. He hid it, but I could tell he

was deeply depressed. He told me of all the hard times he had had. Being in jail, sent to rehabs... winding up in the hospital several times, and several bouts of recurring cancer, which I guess is why he never had any hair. He had hundreds of stories... all quite ghastly. He had been doing this for years and every road we turned on, he had a story of scoring dope there. Every one.

He was a year older than me, but looked very rough. I noted this and decided I didn't want to do this my whole life. I know he was sleeping in my garage for a while, and that alarmed me. My neighbors knew of him and warned me to stay away from him. Things started to disappear and I knew it had to be Ron's doing. I broke ties with him after a while, saying that I appreciated the hookups but I needed my life back and he needed to find his. The last time I saw him he came to my house, dope-sick and jonesing bad. He asked for a pill, and I said I didn't have any. He pretty much just started begging me and I felt bad for him. I told him that this wasn't any kind of life for him and that he needed to get control over his addiction. I wasn't much better, but at least I had a way to make a living and do what I needed to do. He thanked me and walked out the door and down the lonely street I lived at, several miles from the city and certainly a long walk for him... I heard he had died a few years later, after a 6 month detox program, on his first night of freedom. He did the common mistake that users do, and used the same amount he used when he was doing it every day... and "fell out".

He told me many times, how he had saved people's lives that had "fallen out", but no one was there to help him when it happened to him. It was his advice and his technique that I used to help Kari and save her life for the third time. I told Kari about him later when she was detoxing at her folks house. I said to her... "for some reason we get a second chance baby. We've been lucky up 'til now, but our luck will run out at some point. I'm so glad we've made it this far. We're so lucky to have found each other, but if one of us dies, it will ruin the other for life." I know she listened. I know she heard me and it had an impact. She talked about it non-stop after that. She

had lost one guy, but the thought of losing me put her in a state of panic just to think about it.

After the bust and my introduction to St Louis dope, Kari stayed at my house a lot more often... I don't know if it was the drugs, or me, or both...but she was there nearly every day and stayed there for days on end. She picked up the habit quick and I had to work longer and harder to take care of both of us... We grew closer and I felt like I had a real girlfriend in her... but I hated that she was doing what I was. It put a taint on the whole thing. Drugs weren't the reason we came together... the reason we were as close as we were, was because for all the years previous I had been the only guy who wanted her to be clean and to have a good and innocent life... I was her friend and this wasn't what a friend would do.

And in the middle of this my grandmother died. She asked if I wanted her to go to the funeral, but I told her she didn't have to. They really didn't know each other. My grandmother had a small inheritance and my mother shared it with me, and I shared it with Kari... money was always pretty easier for me to come by than it was for her. I worked on line and played gigs a lot. Kari started to warm up to our life together and she loved my mom, as well. It wasn't ideal, because of the drugs, but she was coming out of her shell... or dropping the walls she always seemed to have up and the vulnerable loving girl was emerging. Kari asked me if it was ok if my mom could be her mom too, and I told her it was already the case. She smiled and took that in... so with the bit of money we had gotten, it was party time for a few weeks, some new clothes for us and plenty of the St Louis stuff for nights of bike rides and dive bars and recording sessions...

Our habit wasn't as bad as it would get, and we were able to behave normally and appear that way. We weren't as hardcore as many get, as we were still new to the drug... so our lives weren't severely impacted. We were able to play gigs, sing, record, ride our bikes and keep our house clean and our yard tidy. Drugs just made it easier and more fun.

We also had a lot of sex! It's not often the common thing for addicts. But we did. I guess it helps that we were in love and she was gorgeous and a she-devil in bed! It was our first honeymoon period, but we still hadn't even said those three words. I guess we were both too guarded and worried that the other wouldn't return the sentiment. I know that I loved her back then. And I found out later that she was in love with me. We just hadn't said it yet.

I had been seeing other women, up until this time, but I stopped for her. She knew I had and she knew that I had blown all of them off to be with her. It was the first time we were a real couple. It lasted more than a few months, but I don't remember saying those three little words. I remember feeling it and getting the same from her, but we were too insecure or too happy to ruin it. We just survived without it fine.

The R&B band I had been playing in started getting bigger and better paying gigs at the casino and Kari really liked that band. She thought it was funny that there were three VERY black men and one VERY white guy... but we all had the FUNK! She came along with me to many gigs, and she was like catnip to those guys and their fans. I had to keep her very close! Everyone took a shot at her... it was like an unwritten rule that dudes would hit on her, any where, and all of them... But in those blues clubs, those guys would break up with the woman with they were with and get down on one knee!! We just laughed it off and she stuck close to me, usually sitting next to the stage...

She helped us engineer a studio performance for a local TV network. I had heard the audio quality of the live feeds they had done, and wasn't at all impressed. I told them that we would perform, record the performance on our own gear and give them the master to sync up with the video. Kari was the engineer and you can just barely see her off to the right of the band, working the pro tools interface. We got done and packed up the gear and headed back to the house.

Chris had been living in my driveway. He had been drinking heavily and also using other stuff. I had found him the day before, laying on the sidewalk with his ass in the air and his face on the ground. Luckily we were way out in the country and no one could see him in this state. Today he was drunk and babbling. He had been scraping the bottom since Alison had broken up with him. He could have stayed in the house, if he cleaned up and took a shower, but rather than do that, he stayed in his car.

He came up to us as we were going in... I heard him say to Kari... “Sean doesn’t love you... I love you! Come on.. what?... what?” his breath and odor jumped out at her like a stark and pungent warning to back away, which she did.

I yelled at him “Chris! what the fuck?? I’ve forgiven you every messed up thing you’ve done for years... every time I’ve had a woman... you’ve done this! And I let you have Alison... because you both needed a soft place to land... but FUCK! You’re sleeping in my driveway... and I’m literally kicking you out of my driveway because you’re hitting on my girl literally in front of me... are you insane??”

And Chris didn’t miss a beat... he had been planning this “Yea! Fuck you Sean! Don’t do me any favors! You’re AN ASSHOLE! I bet you didn’t know that Sean has TWO other girlfriends!”

...and Kari looked at me, with her face all contorted... “No... I didn’t know that. Really?” and Chris looked pleased with his evil work grinning and uttering “Ha!” as she looked at me with her face questioning....

“Two other girlfriends, Sean? You said you had THREE!! What’s the deal?”
I smiled calmly “I told you I broke up with the school teacher, baby”...
“Oh yea. I forgot. Ok, Chris. Sean and I have something different. We are not committed to each other, but we tell each other everything. Sean is your best friend. I’m just a chick that he’s seeing. You need to get your shit straight. You’re scraping bottom already and you’re trying to steal Sean’s girl again?? Looks like you’re looking for another driveway tonight. And that’s pretty crazy. Sean never says anything bad about you... and I know that he could. I’ve seen people say things to him about you being with Alison... he tells them that people people do things like that. That you both were kind of alone in this world and he didn’t blame you both for hooking up. That’s huge! I wouldn’t have been so forgiving. Sean is like no other man I’ve met. Maybe we’re not going to be together forever. Maybe the whole idea of forever is silly... but he’s a good man, and you’re a jealous loser. Guess you’d better go.”... and Chris’s jaw dropped the rest of the way as he grumbled like a manic cartoon character and drove away in his rickety old house.

“Seriously? What was up with that?” She said, as we walked in the house.

“hahah... I don’t know... but it was surreal...”
“I mean... what was his plan? were we going to live in his car in your driveway?? happily ever after??”
“I was thinking the same thing... I dunno babe... this might be your big chance at romance!”
“eww.... the dude smells like rancid donuts! What is WITH that smell?”
“Yea... and you KNOW it’s not donuts... And the reason is something horrible...”
“I mean WHY?? Shouldn’t he be thinking of finding a place to live instead of trying to wreck his friendship with the two people on the earth that still talk to him?”
“yea... now you’re making me feel bad...”
“well he does has nine lives though...”
“apparently”

It wasn’t the end of Chris, though. Eventually we let him back in. We missed him. We understood that he was jealous of what we had. And everyone was. But we missed Chris. He was entertaining. He helped us write our songs and had great ideas for titles and band names he would give us... and we struck up a partnership between the three of us that lasted nearly our whole lives. But we both knew we couldn’t really trust him. Life was like that to us... we loved each other, but we didn’t say it. I was afraid that Kari would break my heart. I was afraid to give her that control over me... I didn’t trust her completely... and though I loved her... I wasn’t convinced it was healthy. That we were good for each other. I could be good for her, but instead of her being good for me, I was being bad with her. And that’s why this was working. Because I had fallen and become an addict... so now we had that in common and now we were more compatible. It made me wonder if we would ever be a real couple. Even if I wanted it. Even if SHE wanted it.

We shook off the weirdness of Chris’s performance and I started making dinner. Kari never got over that I could actually cook. I would make something that she’d never had before. That she’d never HEARD of before. And she would make a face...
“What are you making?”
“Baba ganoush!”
“Huh... what is that?”

“It’s a marinated eggplant dip, mixed with spiced tahini paste, and you eat it with a toasted pita!”
“Do you have any chicken nuggets?”
“You KNOW I don’t! hahah”
“But what if I don’t like it?” She whined.
“Then I can make you something else. Something I’m sure you’ll like, but you have to try it.”
“Ok. But I’m really picky. Mom could only make my like FIVE things that I would eat.”
“I’m not your mom.”
I served up the dip and she looked at me with pure trepidation. Something close to disgust and fear... she looked at me with pleading eyes.
“Just try it baby”...
She picked up a pita and imitated my technique and dipped it in the bowl.

Her face changed from a wince and relaxed... she started chewing and grabbed a stack of pita sections.
She looked at me with amazement. “How the hell do you do that? I had no idea I liked egg plant!”

Flash to a few days later...
“OH MY GOD! This is PUMPKIN?! AND CURRY?! I hate BOTH of those things! But this is fucking amazing!”

A week later...
“PEA SOUP?! REALLY?!? I KNOW I hate THAT!”
Two hours later...
“HOW DID YOU MAKE ME LIKE PEA SOUP! You’re AMAZING! I LOVE PEA SOUP! Are you sure that’s what this is? How do you do it!? HOW?!?”

She started to come more often and I could feel myself falling for her again. We were different... and the new house I had found was nice enough and had plenty of room for the recording studio, plus the added bonus of no neighbors. I had picked up a dog at a gig at a campground and Kari loved him so much. His name

was Darryl Hall. She asked me why I named him that, and I said “Because who would name their dog John Oates??” a joke that only she would laugh at! She was seemingly OK for the most part. We started riding bikes again, this time she took to it better and actually enjoyed it, when I found her a better bike to ride. I decked both of our bikes out with blue tooth speakers and lights so we could ride up to the dive bars and listen to music the whole way. Those were fun times. And I felt like things were finally coming into focus.

We started riding bikes more and she was still pretty bad at it. I put the bikes in the back of my truck and took her up to the bike trails in town. They stretched for miles in every direction and were paved and there was no traffic. She liked the peaceful trail and all the nature and the critters scurrying out of the way as we rode along. We rode up to the next town and got some lunch and then rode back using another trail. I wasn’t aware that this trail was still under construction. We had to cross a busy highway and it made her nervous. There was loose dirt on the other side where they had just made a new entrance to the bike path, but it wasn’t paved yet and was steep with the freshly moved dirt. I told her to be careful as we went down the hill, but she didn’t know how to use the brakes properly and used the front brakes... before I knew it, I watched her fall in slow motion... letting out a little scream as the back tire lifted up and the front tire dug into the loose dirt and she SLOOOOWLY fell head first over the handlebars and landed on her chest in the crusty gravel and dirt.

“AAAAAAAHHHH” She jumped up. She had a sexy low-cut sports bra on, and her ample, amazing breasts were covered with dirt and little pinprick cuts that were bleeding.

“Seaaan!!” She whined. She was so pathetic. She wasn’t that hurt, but she was covered with dirt and the little cuts. We were just off the side of the highway and the cars were idling by in the rush hour traffic.“Oh baby! Ooooh! Ooooh! You poor thing!”

“I skinned my boobs! And they’re all dirty!”

“oooh nooo!” I walked my bike up to her and put my hand on her head and kissed her cheek and kissed her poor skinned up girls. “OH MY GOD!” screamed someone from their car, either feeling sorry for her, or was stunned, seeing me kissing her ample breasts... she looked up at the traffic, for a moment.

“What can we do?”

“We have to get that cleaned up. That’s the most important thing.”

“I had a little towel on my bike, and a 1.5 liter of cold Evian that I had just bought at a gas station before we got back on the path.

“Come up here on the sidewalk. It’s hard to stand on this loose dirt.”

We laid our bikes down by the path and walked the few feet back up to the sidewalk next to the busy road.

“Oh Sean, There’s dirt in my sports bra!”

“I know, baby. We’ll take care of it. OK... now this is gonna be cold. When I count to three I want you to bend over and pull the bra out a little.”

“Ok”

“One, Two, Three!”

SPLASH went half of the ice cold water onto her chest and bra as she held it open... and **SCREEEEEEECH** went the tires of the cars on hwy 159.

“ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME!!!” came a shocked and obviously happy voice from a car.

“Sean... I’m so embarrassed.”

“Yea...UGH hahah... I’m sorry... but that was the hottest thing I’ve ever seen... holy shit baby!”

“It’s not hot! I’m hurt! ...and maybe a little hot... BUT MORE HURT!”

I took my towel and doused it with some more water and started padding her off, pulling her bra out and dumping some more water into it.

“That’s SOO COOOOLD!” She squealed.

“OH! THANK YOU SWEET JESUS!!!”... “TAKE IT OFF!!” Two separate cars yelled.

“Sean, can we please go back on the path!!!”

“Yes, baby. I think they’ve had enough. We don’t want to cause an accident. Or a heart attack!”

“I think you enjoyed that a little too much!”

“Maybe a little! hahah. I’m sorry...”

“It’s ok. I liked it a little too... aside from the pain. hahah”

“Yea... someone’s gonna have a story to tell when they get home!”

“Yea! I saw this girl flashing all the cars in the traffic and a guy dousing her tits with cold water!”

“yea! And she was pretty as a fucking angel! And had the best biggest amazing naturals I’ve ever seen! hahah. You’re gonna be famous.”

“Let me see the towel and the water... I gotta get a little more clean...”

It had taken us years, but we finally had a fun day riding bikes. Kari was still pretty shaky, but she held her own. She had wrecked all three times we had tried, but now that the worst had happened, she seemed to be more in control. We got back to the truck and went home. I cleaned her up better in the bathroom and things got way out of control... Her body was just too sexy... and the fantasy of all the guys driving on route 159 that day was the one I was living that night. Life was good.

We would put on a decent buzz and ride our bikes around, getting stronger as we got higher... losing weight and gaining muscles, while our habit wasn’t too crazy... we’d sniff a little, feel all happy, and ride around until dark, stop by the dive bar with our blue tooth speakers blasting as we rode our bikes in the open doorway into the room full of drowsy drunks... bright lights on our bikes, some strobing, the music cranked, laughing or singing... that crazy guitarist Sean and his favorite girlfriend of the harum... talking to a shady guy... running into the girls bathroom, the both of us together, and coming out sniffing and getting knowing looks from everyone in the bar...

Then later, we would be ready to do the big hill on spring street... we h had been trying to do it for months... all spring and now all summer... and now it was becoming fall... and this night was the night... Kari said “I’m gonna do it! It won’t beat me tonight. My legs feel SO STRONG AAAAAAAAARRRRGGGGG!” and she rode full force up the steep hill, making her girly noises of huffing and breathing loudly... and she did it! She made it all the way up and didn’t even slow down... she got to the top “DID YOU SEE IT? DID You?!”

“Of course! You did it!”

“I never thought I would ever do that! My legs are SO DAMNED STRONG NOW... that’s just amazing! Come here.”

I walked my bike over... she grabbed my head as a car passed and gave me a hot long kiss...

“I’ve never had so much fun with anyone, Sean. you’ve shown me how fun this can be... to... to ride and just... I don’t know... it’s different? Right? Do you feel it too?”

“Of course!”

Now she was the one tripping on the words... I could tell... she wanted to tell me she loved me... she did love me. But it was fun to just see her full of this giddy excitement for a change. She had been through so much... this was fun. This was the beginning of us. And I was enjoying her too... more than ever.

This was our first honeymoon period. There’s no good texts from this time, that I can find, because texts happen when you’re away from each other and we never were, but our days were filled with bike-rides, keeping a steady but slight buzz on, cooking outside and enjoying each other’s bodies.
A few months into this, she started getting sick... and I started worrying... she said it was likely the junk doing it, but I knew better, having been there a few times... she was pregnant. It only took a test to confirm it and of all the things to have happen to our new and blissful existence... this sucked. Strangely, I felt things with her that I’ve never felt with other girls. I WANTED to have a family and I WANTED her to be sober and have my baby... she had always said that a baby would probably save her life, which is a strange thing to say, typically, but with Kari, it made sense... but we were strung out... there was no way we could do this at the time. We had to end it. And we did.

Usually she was the strong one... the stoic fatalist... but the hormones and the life growing inside her showed a vulnerability that had been under the surface for all the years I had known her. This was hard. This time I was the strong one. I didn’t show that it was tearing my heart out. I spoke in practical terms and told her that they would take the baby away if she had it. She reluctantly agreed and I was relieved. I wanted to have that family with her... but that was going to be down the road, if ever. And we had just started this thing together. I had no idea how long it would last. If I could

trust her. Trust her to not flake out. To not cheat on me. God forbid, with my heart. I wondered how much she felt for me after all this time. With any other girl I would have known, but with Kari... we just lived this life together... we didn't talk about such things, and when we did, it was quick and to the point... and at the end of it all, I didn't know if I could even believe her. But I dearly wanted to. I wanted this to be the start of something. But not a family... not now, just as I finally felt we were heading in the direction of being a couple for once. Not now. Oh, my heart hurt.

We made the appointment and she stayed with me every day until it came. The day before it, we stayed together in bed most of the day. We knew what was coming and I could feel the sadness and dread come in waves and hear it in her heavy sighs. I felt terrible. I could feel her sadness. Something I hardly ever felt like this. It was all out there. And it was killing me.

"you know I've always thought a baby would save my life" she said out of the silence of our room.

"Oh, baby. I know! I feel that way too"...
"really?"
"yea..."
"you think that about yourself?"
"oh... no... sorry, I think that about you"...
"oh"
"I'll be ok, baby... but I worry a lot about you. You've always had this fatalistic streak that scares the crap outta me... it's like your whole life has this sort of 'gallows humor' around it... the music, the drugs, the wild-child that you are, your fascination with death and the death of your first love... it all strikes me as a bright flame courting tragedy...one that will die too soon..."
"I know. No one would want to have a child with me. Even Ned didn't."
"Kari, my beautiful songbird. I don't think we're ready. And I know, no one ever thinks they're ready, but we just came together recently like this. I've

enjoyed having you here, and honestly, I've felt things for you that would scare me with any other woman."

I rolled over towards her. She had been feeling bad all day, with hormones and nausea having their way with her mood... she was anxious and trying to medicate herself until it didn't hurt. And I obliged her.

I put my hand on her stomach... she looked down at it and then at me... she put her hand on mine.... "it's lower" she said, and my hand down to where here womb was...
I moved over in the bed and put my head there...
"what are you doing?"
"I don't know"
I lay there for a moment... with my head on her...
And I don't know why, but I started talking to our child... "hello, little tadpole... I want you to know that Kari and I do want you and that she would be a wonderful mom... but we're just not ready for you now, but we will be some day. So please come back. We want you. Please come back." her hand was on my head, gently stroking.
She made a little longing noise, "Ugh.."

I moved back up to her pretty face, the way I hadn't seen it in years... with no makeup, looking like my little tomboy again.
"Are you serious?" She asked. Her face flushed...
"Yea. I've pictured our baby. I've never done that with any other woman. I can't explain that. Every other woman I've been with that even got scared of being pregnant, I usually broke up with them. The thought of a baby with them made me feel physically sick. Like a baby was some kind of sickness I could catch. With you... I just think... wow... that would be the cutest little red-headed baby girl in the world. Smart. Talented. With the best singing voice on this planet!"
"Don't fuck with me, Sean."
"When have I ever?"

She sighed...“Never!... and I want a boy! UUUUGH!!!” she said abruptly and got up to run to the bathroom. She had been close to tears, but now she was running to throw up.

A while later, she came out with face red... I couldn’t tell if she was emotional or throwing up... or both.

She laid down next to me for a while. We touched and held each other for a long time as we squeezed, rubbed and relieved each other’s stress and worry... I rubbed her neck and back, massaged head and gently pulled her hair.... something I had done for years.
“you’re the only person that’s ever done that to me... it feels awesome. Tug it a little harder. Mmmmm...” and after a while, it heated up and we made love for what we knew would be the last time for a while.

She wanted to be numb that day... so I obliged her... the cost of the procedure and the stuff she needed was a strain, but I knew she would use this opportunity to get high, and I didn’t preach to her for once.

I took her to the clinic and held her close the whole time. We were the couple everyone felt sorry for, as the other women with their boyfriends, husbands, girlfriends, ...some with their parents ...watched us with eyes of detached pity. She was very sad, even as high as she was. Asking me if I was sure this was the right thing several times, making my heart hurt more each time. It was her first time doing this. It wasn’t mine. And I felt horrible. I felt like the worst. She was nervous and questioning me until they called her and she went back into the rooms they had and put on the skimpy gowns they handed out to the 12 women awaiting their procedures.

When they all came out, she was the only one who looked shattered out of all of them and I felt shattered. But I was the strong one. I was the one that hid it this time. It’s strange that I never told her how I felt that day and thought I held up pretty well. But she told other people that I felt as bad as her that day... I guess I don’t hide things as well as I think. Kari and I both

had expressive eyes... the big windows to a big soul and a bigger heart. While our mouths sometimes tell lies to protect ourselves and others, our eyes aren't capable.

They had given her more drugs there, things for anxiety and a cocktail of things that actually worked as an amnesiac... to help you forget what just happened... and those had interacted with the stuff she was already on and she was sleepy and dazed.

I held her all the way home, as she lay across the bench seat in my old truck... silent, with her head in my lap... and took her to bed. When she woke up later, I talked to her for a while and assured her that someday I wanted to do it for real. We hadn't said those three little words, but I felt it. I knew she did too. She woke up the next morning and was quiet. I tried to talk to her, but it wasn't the easy thing it had been for months. She said she was going home to see her folks for the day. I worried. I wasn't sure what I was worried about... but I wanted her there with me. I was hurting too. I don't think she knew that. But I was and her leaving made me feel very alone and very sad. I wanted it to be ok... but I guess it wasn't.

But I didn't want her to blame me. It wasn't my fault. But maybe she did blame me... I wanted to talk, but she wasn't doing it and soon she was gone and I was hurt and hollowed out. Wondering what it all meant. If it would ever be easy... if I should have just let her have the baby and gotten clean for it. I didn't think she was ready to be clean. I didn't know if I was either. I was using, but I had a reason. I was in pain. Wasn't I?

I was riding bikes, playing in the band, taking care of the lawn and the house. Was it the drugs allowing me to do this, or had my back gotten better? Even with drugs, it should still hurt once in a while, right? I hadn't noticed. But maybe it had healed. Or I had just been doing so much heroin it never had a chance to hurt? It got me to thinking. And it got me feeling intense regret. Maybe we should have had it. Maybe it would have changed things. It was so hard to trust her, though. We had just started being a

couple. And now she was gone. Just like that. How could i have a baby with a girl who could just get up and leave me when I needed her??

It was after this, that she changed... and it was a sad transformation. She was disappearing in the drug haze and nothing made her feel whole or better. No amount would do for her. She came over and just laid on my couch... I tried to ride bikes with her, but she said she was too sick... she felt bad all the time. I knew she was depressed and self-medicating, but I didn't know what to do.

About this time, she was hanging out with the scummy couple that had come by the first time she was on "h" at my house. I had never seen them but for that first night they dropped her off and she stayed with me. She got a call from the girl one night while she was at my house. The guy she had been with for many years had died. They were using needles and he took a big hit and had a heart-attack. Not even an OD, but a heart attack after his hit. They may have been speed-balling, she said. It was the first time that death had hit us together as a couple, if we were even a couple. She was despondent and freaked out by this and seemed to be considering her own life and mortality. I had lost a friend a few years earlier to a fentanyl patch... he had performed the violin solo on one of our more popular recordings. He was obviously wasted when he came over and said that he had forgot to take his Ritalin for the past week and had taken all of them that day to get caught up, and he was drinking a 40oz. But his playing was inspired. I had written sheet music for the solo portion for him, which he could supposedly read, but he didn't bother for many hours and we recorded take after take, trying to get something we could keep. I eventually got him to play the part as written and used that and some other tracks he had done, with over 50+ takes, edited together to get one decent solo. It was only a few weeks later that he had apparently eaten a fentanyl patch, something very dangerous and crazy if you are naive to the effects... and died nearly immediately after. His Name was Tom Bailey and it was the first time I had heard of this drug and the first time opiates had hit in my circle of friends...

She started to show up less and less. I asked her to come by, but she would make plans and never come. She eventually told me that she had a new job. I wondered what the heck job she could be doing in her state... she told me... she was a STRIPPER! She also did webcams... and “I have my own web site!” she said in a voice that longed for validation. One time during this period I called her at her new number and she answered the phone
“this is Kelly..”
“Kari?”
“who is this?”
“it’s SEAN!”
“fuck”...

so I saved her new number as “Kari as Kelly”... some years later, I was scrolling through all the numbers I had for her in the past, and I showed her all of the numbers I had saved for her... about NINE in all... It got so I couldn’t save any more under her name, so since December of 2014, she has been “wife” on my phone.
...and she saw “Kari as Kelly” and she was mortified!
“DELETE THAT!”
“why babe?”
“JUST DELETE IT! NOW!”

... but I didn’t... maybe I should have... but it was a part of our history and I didn’t delete things ever... I kept everything. Kari did too... she valued every little scrap and picture that we ever had and kept them safe in storage on her phone and her computers. She kept everything. So many pictures, movies, random memorabelia... our old business cards that read Sean and Kari Sweeney... she even took my last name! LOL... But Kelly was the name she used now and this was a dark time. I was losing her to this “job” and I hated it.

May 10, 2019. Kari was a friend of Jessie

I never know how sweet and sentimental she was when we were together... There were so many things I never knew about, like pictures of me sleeping, what she would say to other people about me... and how much she saved from our life together, in pictures and momentos, the unseen facebook posts... they are all over and haunt me every day, reminding me of the wonderful person that inhabited my life for 16 years. And I was the same, too, and saved everything, as well... most importantly, our music.

That is what hurts the most about the Colorado fiasco... I lost a computer there that had a lot of our stuff on it and though I had some of that backed up, there were some early recordings, early MASTERS (multi-track sessions, important because they can be further edited and produced) and emails that I will never see or hear again. I really don't know what to do... do I want to even see them again? Writing this book has been therapy for me, of a sort, but it's making it harder to let her go, and people are starting to worry about me. I'm starting to worry about me. I wonder where to go from here... will I find another love... am I supposed to? What about Kari? What do I do to reconcile this loss? Will I never have a family now?

Do I always love her and keep her alive through her words and music and try to comfort by immersing myself in the "content" of our lives? The things that survive... our words, our music, our pictures and the memories that are forever in my head, but grow faded from constant use.... our academy award-winning porno... Like we're still together in some perverse way, always wondering when she'll stop being pissed off and just come back home... or do I let her fade away into the periphery of a large and ultimately, tragically sad, chapter in my life... and it's maddening... the attacks of anxiety that feel like poison being let out into my veins... the intense withdrawal of our love... the drug that I depended on more than any other, by far. Nothing makes it better. I wait for it to pass... and it doesn't. It becomes worse every day. Pushing me to desperation... but there is no outlet! Nothing to focus my pain into... I can't hate her. I can't stop missing her. I can't arrest the feelings of loss or even find the "silver lining"... I pray... I scream... I cry... I lie awake and vibrate with the raw nerves in my

body, on fire... my body gets weaker... I don’t sleep. I fall into delirium... I text her... in the middle of the night... more zombie than human. My half sleep-dream... my subconscious is now in the act. I miss her in my dreams. I dream, without sleeping... and in these dreams I am texting her, as my phone is still right by me... both of us awaiting a message from her. I hear the chime of the text message in my head. It’s not real. But I hear it. And it’s her. And the tears come out as I try to see the phone, because even in my subconscious delirium I am aware that I miss her so much... but my vision is blurry and my hands won’t work. Like a dream where your running, but can only move in slow motion. And I try to text her. But it’s so hard. None of the letters come out right and look like hieroglyphs... minutes and hours go by... trying to get out one sentence... as the tears pool on the phone and my bed. I become more awake hours later and see that I’ve sent a text to a near stranger. It reads. “I miss you so, so very much, my darling. Please come see me” and I lose it. Howling... face contorted. Body heaving in the most intense sobs imaginable... knowing she is gone. There is no one here. No one to feel or hear these things. The life and love that filled these humble walls... ashes ....ashes and gas in the ether. All the plans and the thousands of conversations... texts... notes... breathing in and out... the warmth of her aura next to me. The sound of her breath as she slept. Mute... somber... and a small bag of ashes... the ashes I pictured years ago in the dream. Finally real. As I try to make sense of this.

So Kari was now Kelly. She was lost and she was acting out. Kari had a habit of taking things the hardest... making excuses for her behavior by reacting dramatically to things. Losing the baby to this drug made her feel worthless. And she wanted me to save her. I tried. I don’t know what she wanted me to do. Maybe something equally as dramatic and desperate.

She tortured me. I don’t know why she did it, but she did. Taking pictures of motel rooms. Taking pictures of a fist full of money. Sending them to me with no explanation. She would call me once in a while, but we rarely talked. Of all the times and things we went through I was the most upset over this. And I told her. I was talking to her and she was telling me that

she finally was making real money in this world. I told her “Kari... I don’t know why you tell me these things. I don’t know what you want me to do. You know it hurts me. It kills me. That I think you’re the most amazing person on this planet and the thought of you selling yourself like this is like acid on my soul. You’re head is already one of god’s own private mysteries, you don’t need to invite certain disaster by taking off your clothes for money...” and she would tell me “Sean. I have a felony. I can’t get a job at the DOLLAR STORE... so fuck that. FUCK THE WORLD... I’m cashing in on this while I can. And I can.”
I know she wanted me to do something. I knew we could have a good working band. I knew we could have a life... but this was stupid. I didn’t know what to do, so I started to give up on this 9 year love affair. This near decade with the person I always considered my best friend. And my heart hurt. I tried not to think of it. Of where she was every night. I let her send pictures of where she was at. The pictures of the money. The pictures of the things she had bought. I let her do that. In case something happened to her, at least I could show the police where she was. Maybe that’s why she did it. Because I was the only one who knew. The only one who could know and keep the secret. The only one that could make her stop... if that’s what I was supposed to do. The keeper of the darkest secrets. The secrets that were eating me alive. I saw her losing her innocence. Seeing men and even me as easy marks. A means to an end and it started to occur to me. I was losing her. And I started to give up.

I came to see her once, at her house. I hadn’t been there in a while, because we had always had more fun at my place... our bikes, our garden... our music... our friends... our life seemed to center at my house... but here I was at her little house on her parent’s property in Festus and it felt strange. She was dressed nice. Sexy. But it seemed forced. Like a work uniform... uncomfortable and unlike her. I saw the computer and the small camera. “It’s my webcam”... “Oh...” “I work with a pretty good company. They are legit and keep me protected.” “That’s good”... “Sean... I don’t know what to say to you”... “I know how you feel”... “What am I gonna do? You know me... I’m not cut out for some shit job... not that any would even

have me.” “I can’t help the way I feel, Kari. And by now, you should know the way I feel”... I looked at her and she looked away. I showed her a few songs I had been working on, but it was strange. Forced. She was the person I cared about most in the world... and she was lost and we both knew it. Soon I felt the need to go. And I did. It bothered me a lot. So I started to write some things down... and a while later I had something that was what I wanted to say.

I called her up and said I had a song for her to do.
“Really? A song for me? What is it? It’s not more country is it?”
“No... it’s just something that came to me. I was thinking that we should maybe write a rock opera. About addiction... or maybe our lives.”
“Huh... that sounds like something we could actually do. I don’t think anyone has had the crazy lives that we’ve had. When do you want me to come over?”
“Tomorrow?”
“I’ll be there”
“Thanks... baby.”

She showed up and I was glad to see her. I can’t say it was like old times. It wasn’t. She wasn’t noticeably high... but there was a darkness about her. Maybe a kind of shame. She knew that I wasn’t happy and I couldn’t imagine that she was. We weren’t close. But we were as close as two people could be. It was a strange place to be. All those years. All those moments that to me, meant love.

I pulled out the lyric sheet. “Stranger to Myself. Huh.” She read the lyrics and her face didn’t change.
“It’s good. You have music for it?”
“yes... I wanted you to help me a little. It’s a little raw. The melody isn’t fully formed, and the chords are just kind of vague ideas. I wanted to do it kind of jazzy... a little bit reaggea and jazz... and a little rock opera...”

We wrote the lyrics over about an hour... singing little bits with the guitar. It's strange, because this song was about a girl who's lost in her own body... and it was her. And she wrote the lyrics with me that I didn't have yet... confirming everything I had written. We got to the end and I had an idea for a greek chorus to sing at the end. The traditional greek chorus was a fixture in the earliest of plays. They were used for thousands of years. They took the place of a narrator and were small groups of singers that chanted or sang the parts of the play to establish the setting, or plot... they were the narrators for the actors... establishing scenes, even revealing the inner thoughts of the actors... at the end of the song, the lyrics were "Now I'm a stranger, a stranger to myself." and then she was supposed to defiantly sing "NOT A STRANGER!" but she didn't like that. I told her that ultimately the song should seek to resolve this and not just leave the listener and the singer in this dark place, but find their way out and defiantly shout "I'm not a stranger" and then the greek chorus would echo the same... but she didn't think so. She said "Maybe that person doesn't find their way out... the whole song makes a case for this..."... so we compromised. There are two versions... one with her singing "I'm a stranger" and one with "not a stranger"...
We worked on it for hours after and the music took shape pretty well. She started to loosen up and get into it. She was in pretty good spirits when we did the vocals and nailed them, doing both versions... one that I mixed first and then the second one. She wound up liking my version better... the one that has her breaking free at the end... maybe it was just that she was feeling the old fire coming back with our song. The course of a few hours had changed a lot.

When we were done, she was in a different place. She looked at me in that old way that I remembered. I had written a song for her and it was a good one. It was a little sad, though. But it showed that I cared... and I was worried about her. She came closer to me as I was making her a CD to take with her.
"This was fun, Sean"
"Yea... it was. I've missed you. In many ways"

“I’ve missed you too. In every way...” and she leaned in and kissed me.
I kissed her back, but then pulled away and kept working on the CD.
“What’s wrong?”
“Nothing... everything. I’m sorry.”
“You’ve never turned me down before.”
“First time for everything.”
“Wow... I didn’t think I could feel more down on myself.”
“Don’t take it personally. You know I’ve never been a guy that just hooks up. Whatever you think about me, you have to know that.”
“No, you’re my best friend. My only friend. Which is why I feel so lost, right now.”
“You don’t have to be, baby.”
I handed her the copy of the song on CD.
“I really wanted tonight to be like old times. But I guess I’m not that girl anymore. You’re too good for me, Sean. Don’t think I don’t know that. Don’t think I don’t think of you every day. I do. I’m no good for you, though. You’ll do better without me. I’m sorry. I know you want a soulmate. But I think I sold my soul, Sean, to the junkman. Thanks for the song. It’s great. It hurts a little to see how I’ve changed... but I can’t deny it. It’s good. Like everything we’ve done. It’s our lives in song.”
“Nothing lasts forever, Kari. I half wanted you to tell me you didn’t want to sing it. That this wasn’t you. That you wanted to do something fun, something about love and hope.”
“Well... for what it’s worth, you wrote what I’ve been thinking... you put a name to it. And it’s true. I am a stranger to myself. I guess I need to figure some things out. Thanks for a nice night. I’ll call you.”
And with that she left, and I didn’t hear from her for quite a while.

About this time, I had been seeing a girl in St Louis... and I asked her to come and live with me. I told Kari about it and she took it in her usual tough and stoic way... but I knew it bothered her. I hadn’t lived with someone the entire time I had known her. I had always held out hope for us. Until this. She called me up shortly before she was due to move in an said she wanted to see me before. She had made plans once and didn’t show up.

She called me a few nights later and her voice was shaky. She was in bad shape. I couldn't figure out what was wrong. Our confidence was gone. She didn't tell me things anymore. She sounded desperate and so different.

I was sad. But I wanted to see her, even if it was part of a long goodbye. She asked me if I could get some CRACK... I said "really? you do Crack now??" She said "No. But tonight I feel like it. So get some and I'll be over in a little while."... (fuuuuck)... "OK, I guess." I didn't know any crack dealers and I damned sure didn't feel like finding some in the hood, so I called a crackhead that I knew and asked if he could help. He said SURE, but he needed a ride... I paid dearly for a small chunk of what looked like horrible stuff... but I did my part... I got it... and I waited...
and waited... and waited. I finally went to sleep and around 7AM I heard a knock... and it was Kari... and she was in her stripper gear... and I have to admit she looked pretty hot for a train-wreck... she had lost a lot of weight, and with her talent for makeup, she looked amazing still. But her eyes were gray and lifeless, unseeing. She was as scary as I've ever seen her. The cobalt blue eyes that I had loved for so many years were greyish, unfocused and twitchy and wouldn't meet my gaze...
"did you get it?" she asked, as she shifted nervously in the doorway.
I walked to my couch and sat down, and she nervously walked over and sat. I said "um... yea... you know it's 7AM right?"
"Can you just give it to me?"...
"ok"... I handed her the puny rock that I paid $50 for... "THAT'S IT??!?!?" She stood up and she started to cry... real tears... then she grabbed it and ran out the door. I mentioned this night/morning to her, years later and she said she didn't remember that night. Many years later, a friend of hers told me. She had been raped. She had gone to meet this guy and things went badly. She didn't know what to do. She was traumatized and had run out the door of the guys house with only some of her clothes and her phone. She called her friend and she picked her up. Kari wanted to get stuff, and she helped her, and she put herself into a state that night. She had called me, because she didn't know who else to call when things went bad... but

she didn’t know what to say... she wanted to tell me, but didn’t want me to judge her and be upset... so she didn’t. So she asked me to get her CRACK... and later she passed out at her friends. She had left her car by the guys house and her friend took her back to get it in the morning. She then drove to my house. I didn’t understand what was going on. She didn’t want to tell me. So the tears were something completely different than I had thought for all those years... and the reason she left... because I wouldn’t understand. I wish I could have been there for this... but it would have been hard for me, too.

A few weeks after that she called me in the small hours of the morning. Said some mobsters had been chasing her. She had quit working for the one company and they had sent these guys after her. She said she had barely gotten away. She was running from one of them and they shot out the window of her car. “Jesus! Really??”
“YES!”
“What happened?”
“I drove like a maniac to get away and they stopped following me for some reason and I couldn’t figure out why, until I saw a police sub station ahead and I ran in, screaming for them to protect me, I was so scared!”
“Wow baby!”
“I told them what happened and they came out to look at my car and make a report. And... Sean... the window was replaced. I can’t explain it. They shot the window out and there was glass EVERYWHERE. And when the cop came out, it was replaced with no trace of glass ANYwhere. Sean... how can that be??”
“Oh baby. I don’t know...”
“I know you don’t believe me... but it’s TRUE!”
“Oh baby...”
“Sean... it was real! Are you crying?”
“No. Maybe... I don’t know... yes. It didn’t happen, baby.”
“I know it sounds crazy, Sean. I need you to believe me. I need you to. It happened... I swear on everything that I hold dear. It happened!”
“Ok baby. I believe you.”

“You promise?”
“Yes”...

The other girl moved in and I didn’t hear from her for a while. She would text me once in a while and tell me the sordid details of what she was doing that day... that she was making so much money. Sometimes sending a picture of the money she had made. I told her that she needed to stop. To stop selling herself, but if she had to send the pictures, I understood, but if she ever wanted to have a normal life, she would have to give up the drugs and the dancing and everything. I remember one text she sent of her fanning out money in her hand... with no words... next to a bunch of military medals from the guy she was with, and pictures of his family. Wife, young children. Nice house. Fuck...

My text was “are you trying to upset me?? Do you actually want me to be happy for you?? Why baby? You don’t really expect me to validate this... someone who I’ve always had the highest opinion of... doing this??” She usually didn’t answer those texts and it made me crazy.

One morning I was sleeping and the other girl was there with me and my phone rang... It was Kari and she was sick. Her job had fallen through and she was broke. With all the money she was making, I guess she had a pretty good habit going. She asked me for money... I told her that I didn’t have any. She said that was BS and she was going to wait in my driveway until I came out. So I came out. I pulled out the money, but before I handed it over, I told her that if she ever wanted to have anything to do with me or any other man... to have a real and loving relationship, she would have to stop what she was doing. I told her that in all the years we had known each other, nearly 9 at this point, that I always wanted to tell her something,... but the time was never right... and that she knew what it was. That she had known many men, but they had never known her... except for me. And I had wanted to tell her for so many years... but maybe it would never happen now. I wanted her to think and try to get through to her… I gave her

the money and she looked at me with a strange look of confusion, guilt and shame on her face. I watched her drive away. And true to form, she paused at the end of the driveway and looked back at me with those giant blue eyes... sad and haunted. Leaving me to worry and wonder about the girl I had once hoped for a life with. I will never forget that morning...
It was early summer and it was only in the spring that we were planting our garden together. I looked out at the garden and it was overgrown. Weeds had taken over and all of the vegetables had shriveled or been attacked by some kind of bug or animal... I looked at the hard work from that day we spent and my heart hurt. Wondering where she was. What she was doing. Why she was so lost and knowing that it hurt me, why she was still doing this stuff! I missed her. I loved her. But none of that seemed to matter. Loving Kari was just pain to me. I couldn't even tell her. I could... but there was a reason I hadn't... it had been almost ten years. We had time after time started down that road, only to lose each other in some stupid drama... something crazy that shouldn't have happened. There was a reason we weren't together... and she was hell bent on destroying herself. Maybe it would never be. I had told her over and over what I wanted. More than hinted. If it made a difference... if I made a difference, then it would have happened. Time to cut my losses and take care of myself. I'll miss you, songbird.

Chapter Ten.
"I'm going to Colorado to live"... was the text I sent her.
My phone rang a minute later.
"Sean... why??"
"Why do you think?! Because things are too fucked up here and I don't want to watch you self-destruct. The girl I've been seeing got a job there and I'm going with her. I can't be around these people here... there are things being stolen from my garage, and you only see me when you want something. You're out of your mind ALL the time, and I'm tired of crying for you when you obviously don't care. She's already in CO, and I'm coordinating the move. The movers will be here in about a month. I'll be changing my number. I'm done with this fucking place."

“so you’re there alone?”
“yes”
“can I come over?”
“Ugh... maybe... I don’t know. You’ve been a basket case. I don’t know why you’d want to see me. What do you want from me?... I don’t know who you are anymore.”
“I’ll quit my job...”
“doesn’t matter, I won’t be here.”
“please Sean... can I see you?”
“Kari, I know you’re a prostitute. What is there left of you that you have left to give me??”
Silence. She knew me. She knew I wasn’t stupid. She knew I wouldn’t say something like that without knowing.
“So you knew?” her voice sounded small and frail, like a chastised girl.
“Baby... you DON’T DANCE...you CAN’T DANCE... and the money you were making, and the places you were going... if you were dancing, you would have 1’s and you only ever had large bills... and what you’ve described... you’ve done all but tell me flat out... I know...” my voice was sad and low, as if I was announcing the death of my best friend...
“I’ll stop.”
“You mean you’ll tell me you stopped and just do whatever you want to, like you always do... I won’t know, I’ll be in COLORADO...”
“I’ll stay with you every day... like before. I’ll quit. I’ll turn off my phone... you can take the fucking battery out of it! ”
“FUUCK... ok. I didn’t want to leave without saying goodbye to you, anyway... I just thought I wouldn’t get a chance. I thought you would be dead soon... I really did.”
“I was headed that way. I think you know why. I need you to help me. I have seriously wanted to die”...
“you always make excuses, Kari! I’ve been here for you for NINE years and you screwed things up every time we got close... it’s time to STOP... there’s always going to be an excuse... your dead boyfriend, your PERIOD, your PREGNANCY, your ABORTION... people go through these things and never use... can’t you be one of them??”

“Yes. I mean, I’ll try... I’m so confused, Sean. I don’t know why I do these things... I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I only know you’ve kept me on this planet longer than I ever expected to be. I’m leaving now.”

She was there within the hour, which surprised me. She came in the door and grabbed my face and kissed me like I hadn’t been kissed in years. She told me she hadn’t done any stuff that day, that she was ready to climb the walls, but she wanted to come to me sober, even if just for a while. She handed me her phone and I took the battery out and laid it on the computer table, out of sight, but where she knew where it was. I hugged her for a while.

I didn’t know if I should kiss her. I never felt like that before. I hadn’t had any relations with Kari over this crazy period and I didn’t know how she would be able to have a normal relationship after all that... but... somehow we did. I guess she just was made of something different than most girls. She always bounced back from the brink. Drama and trauma were part and parcel in her life, but she never seemed to carry the scars... not to the extent that anyone else would have... she was tougher than me. Tougher than anyone... and underneath it all, she still had a heart of gold. A heart of gold, wrapped in a enigmatic, beautiful body of pure, neurotic energy. Sure, she was out of control and crazy... but she was smart enough to realize she was different. She was vulnerable... the kind of thing a predator looks for in a girl... and even I, myself, found it attractive. She was always an artist... but so many things on top of it. Every time I have dated another girl, I always expect these things... but there was only one Kari. And I can’t explain why after all this time... I was so in love with her. My fallen angel. How could I resist someone who needed me that bad?

I took her to the clinic. Had her put through a much needed battery of tests and put on methadone. When the tests all came back negative, I was relieved, and when she wanted to high-five me, I was a little exasperated at how excited she was. “Oh come on! This is great news! HIGH FIVE ME!!” It was great news... but the reason it was great news, was the reason I was

shaking my head. She sensed that and put her arms around me. “I’m sorry, Sean. I just realized how surreal this is for you. You care more about me than I care about myself. I’ve really tortured you, haven’t I?”

I knew she would need to get some help, and methadone wasn’t the ultimate solution I wanted, but I didn’t have time to go through a detox with her, and I was still doing drugs and packing to leave soon. It was the best I could hope for, and it wasn’t easy, even with that.
But she got through. And she didn’t touch her phone the whole time. I was scared of it and I think she was too.

She stayed with me every day and night until the day before the movers came. She even helped me pack things up... she asked to use her phone to call her parents once, but I told her to use mine. She rolled her eyes and said “really?”
“you don’t know your own triggers, do you?”
“what do you mean, triggers?”
“your phone is the worst thing about you, baby. It gets you into every trouble that you’ve been in. If you open that thing now and see texts from drug dealers and god knows who and what else, you’re going to change. You’re going to think of nothing but that, and then you will make up some reason and leave.”
“your too good to me, Sean. You’re too good *for* me”
“you mean good, like I’m boring.”
“god no, you’re life is as crazy as mine! Your roommate just got busted for a meth lab and you have that crazy musician thing goin... and you’re with me...”
“I’m not with you, baby. We’re saying our long goodbye and I’m trying to get peace in my mind that the person I care for more than anyone else in this world isn’t going to die when I leave. And I still will worry. I will always worry.”
I handed her my phone, she looked at me and said “triggers, huh?’...
I was with her, but I was leaving in days...

We had about a month together. And it didn’t get old; although providing the two of us with narcotics was a little difficult, since she had been doing a lot at her “job”, spending all of her money on it. The clinic was no substitute for what she was used to, but we managed to get by ok, but it was less than she was used to, and she had to fight the craving to do more... but she wanted to be good. She tried hard and was able to taper down quickly, which is never easy and there were days were she felt terrible and I could tell, but she was happy. Happy to be somewhere safe... and the last week came. We had everything packed up but my music gear and necessities I would need. I wanted to do a song with her as we had discussed it... and had missed that connection, but a special song. One for our love and relationship... one to mark the occasion. Chris and I had worked on a song of his and I decided it was time to make it real. I got the studio ready and asked her to be my engineer and producer. She always took the role seriously and was both my harshest critic and biggest fan. When I had cobbled together the basic tracks for the song, I sang the lead vocals, which were a little low for me at the time... nowadays I can sing them much better, but this is the version I sang for her back then. As always she took a picture to commemorate the occasion...

This was to be the last song I recorded with Kari. The month we had was special and I felt something more than I had before. I knew what it was, but it scared me to have these feelings for a girl who wasn’t in control of herself. It was a strange time... but I think it was the first time I felt she was all mine if I wanted. This song was our farewell. I asked her to do some angelic background vocals and of course, she kills it. This is the first decent mix of that session and I remember her being really happy, contrasting her state the last several months. She looked better and acted... like a loving wife.

She said, "so this hasn't been so bad, has it?"...

"yea?"

"you know, this living together thing"

"Kari... it's been really nice" (The words were always prodding me. To say “I love you... I always have” but I still didn’t say them)

"maybe it's something you wanna keep doing..."

"it is, baby".

These words are forever etched into my mind. It was Kari at her most vulnerable, looking for validation in her hard work, tapering down, and coming back for me. I know addiction is a bitch and most people say recovery is a selfish thing that people do for themselves, but maybe Kari didn’t feel good enough about herself to do that. Maybe she needed to do it for true love. And how could I complain about that... whatever it was, it worked at the time and I was so glad to have her back, even if it was just for a long goodbye.

Thanks to songwriter, Christopher Zaganelli, for our life in song.

Kari And Sean - Farewell (Look Away).

Soon it was our last day.
Kari had eased off the drugs a lot and was like a different person. She was talking about going to the clinic again...
“you know, staying with you these last weeks has been the best time I’ve had in years... maybe ever. It makes me want to be good. I want to be good for you, Sean. Makes me think of how amazing it would be if we lived together.” Her words released a rush of chemicals in my brain rivaling the purest dope I’ve known...

“I know... It’s so confusing to me too, I feel something different this time... but I think it’s too late, baby... you’re sobriety is very tenuous, you’re just one bad day away from using again and I know you... and I’m still using... and you know what? My back doesn’t hurt anymore! It’s been over 2 years on this drug and the only reason I use now, is because I’m addicted. I need to get away from this area. There’s too much temptation. You’re in that group of people that I need to get away from. You make it all seem normal somehow, and it’s NOT! It’s not how I want to live. If we ever come together again, it’s not going to be like this. I want the whole package. I want a wife

and a family. How are you going to do that, when your head is fucked up from drugs, selling your body, and your dead ex-boyfriend and all the things you use as an excuse to destroy yourself. I'm tired of worrying about you. It hurts. It hurts, because... I..." Once again, I tripped on the words... "This is goodbye Kari. I had a great time with you... I will always remember you and the things we did... the music and the times that you were sweet and sober and ... loving. I just can't do it anymore. I'm sorry."
A silence took over. A silence that hadn't been there for weeks... as we lived out our days, happy... chirping like love birds...
"I think I'm the one that's sorry, Sean"
"Kari... you're my beautiful Songbird and I know I'll never find anyone like you... EVER! I just know you're going to break my heart eventually... one way or the other. I just know you're going to..." She looked up these words... and my tears, that seemed to come so much easier than hers... But not this time. She looked devastated. Her face, looking better than it had in months, showing emotions that had returned along with her hormones and new fervor, she flushed red, her face clear with no makeup, her skin smooth, without the acne that had come back from her drug use, her eyes, a deep clear, misty indigo... she came closer and her face was very hot and her lips more so, and I could smell her tears as she softly kissed me with her lips healthy and plump again, as soft as she ever had kissed me... a kiss goodbye ...and before she became any more vulnerable, she quickly wiped her tears and left.

Emotions are amplified when you are coming off opiates... That's why people do them... to become numb, to cover up pain... and Kari had been numb for a long time. Feeling these things again was a wonderful and terrible thing. She realized the spectacle she had been. The train wreck... and how cruel she had been to someone she obviously loved. And here I was, packed and leaving for another state to live... because of this... because of her... and she wanted me to stop. To not leave... but I had already done it... and she knew I had to go.

She left her thigh high boots and several things there from her “stripper” days... I don’t know if she didn’t want them, or forgot them, or if she was trying to tell me that she was done... I didn’t know what to do with them as I was going to be gone the next day. And showing up with a box full of sexy women’s clothes might have been hard to explain... especially in my new living arrangement with the “other girl.” I wound up leaving them behind.

I didn’t know it at the time, but she told me later that I saved her life. That after the abortion, she thought so little of herself that she didn’t care about life anymore. She told me that she didn’t think that anyone cared if she lived or died, and I told her that she was stupid for thinking that... that I had always been there for her and I had always cared and thought we were destined for each other... She thought if she was so fucked up that she couldn’t have a baby with the man that she loved, that she was of no use to anyone, anyway. When I told her I was moving that snapped her out of it, somehow. It let her know that I cared... even though I was running away. It was true... but running away didn’t fix either me... or her... but it did show us how we felt, inevitably.

Her voice echoed in my head in the silence after she left. Sometimes her voice had this old-timey quality. The way women used to talk, back in the 40’s. The way Judy Garland and so many other classic singers and actors talked. That pure husky tone that came from smoking at age ten... and diction lessons... a voice I’ve never heard from anyone in her generation... except for her. When I first told her about this she knew exactly what I meant and it thrilled her that I heard it in her. I think there were times that she tried to channel those people who spoke like that... she was an amazing vocalist and chameleon, so it was something she could and did do. We performed in many bands for years and I’ve heard her do songs from nearly every decade and in the style of 100’s of artists... even YODELING... she could do an amazing yodel, though I’m not sure how many of her songs survive with that obscure talent! But we both liked the “vintage” classic women’s voices of old film stars... Like the voice of Disney’s Snow White... or Glinda the Good Witch... or Dumbo’s Mother...

That voice used to be all over! She told me her grandmother spoke that way and since then, it became something she was obsessed with... that amazing voice from the past. Just another reason why she was my one in a million girl, and we connected on so many levels. She truly had an incredible brain, but when I first met her, and for many years after, she would marvel at me as well, often saying “why the hell are you even with me, I’m so friggen dumb!” But she was anything but. And as we grew up and older together, she matured intellectually, and fast. She loved to win an argument and if she caught me in a mistake, which she often did, she would let me have it! Saying “wow! I got ya!” Mocking me in her sing-song, kids voice “you were wrong”... She was all the women in my life, to me... a child, a lover, a wife, a mother, and even a grandmother... I felt all of these things with Kari... and it wasn’t twisted... or was it? I’ve never had a relationship that felt like all of those things. I’ve never felt it nor had it returned to me in that way. Unconditional... That I could never stop loving her, no matter what she did and she could never stop loving me... how could I have a life without this person? She needed me and I needed her. And I never thought there would be a day without this person in my life... never.

The movers came out and tagged every single piece in the whole house. She had helped me box up all the small pieces and miscellaneous that fit into the boxes. The total sum accumulation of my life, thus far, everything from my life as a musician, my writing, my music, my gear... and it took up over half a semi trailer, that was headed for Colorado. They loaded up my truck onto a carrier and I packed a suitcase to live out of until my stuff arrived in Colorado.

I boarded a Greyhound bus that took me there, getting very high on a large bag of dope that I bought to last me the trip up there and for about a week after that. It was hard not to think of the events of the last month and the girl that I had such strong feelings for. She was really a sweet girl, under it all... and it seemed like she really liked me... like she might even love me. But we rarely saw each other unless there were drugs involved and I

wanted that to be over... I didn’t even like the thought of her going to the clinic. I wanted her to be like she used to be... when two vicodin were all we needed to “get a buzz” and have fun all evening. I worried about her and what would happen now that I was gone. I was riding in a bus in the middle of the night, trying to find comfort in this new place I was going, and facing my sobriety head-on. I was reasonably sure this was the right thing to do.